

*This*  
MAN'S  
WORLD

• • WILL • •  
LEVINGTON  
COMFORT



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**THIS MAN'S WORLD**

*Books by*  
**WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT**

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SHIELDING WING  
THIS MAN'S WORLD  
YELLOW LORD

*By* WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT *and*  
ZAMIN KI DOST  
SON OF POWER





*"The monk's eyes now held his with a steady, contemplative  
regard, voice controlled"*

# This Man's World

By  
Will Levington Comfort



*Frontispiece*  
*by*  
*Walter de Maris*

Garden City, N. Y., and Toronto  
Doubleday, Page & Company  
1921



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**PART ONE**

**THE ISLAND MAN**



# THIS MAN'S WORLD

## I

### NEWSBOY AND RENEGADE

**R**OTHATCHER ate a handful of grapes and a bit of cheese at ten in the morning. Two or three months of the year the grapes were dried, but in the main they came fresh from Tuscany, packed in grained cork. This was not the hour of his first food of the day, but his first drink. Rothatcher preferred an aromatic *cote d' wyndham* at this time; that is, unless there had been some unusual pressure upon his capacious hospitality the night before, that left him a bit drawn in the early hours. He often declared that a man would never become a drunkard, even in the Islands, if he refrained from drinking until ten a. m. The institution of breakfast in his case was at seven. The big man might have tarried with friends hours past midnight, but still he had his coffee with several Vermont sausages long before most of his clerks. In the three hours after breakfast, he did the main part of his day's work, keeping up a

tremendous activity in spite of years of tropic weathering.

He was one of the directors of the Asiatic Cordage Company and high in authority among the Insular Warehousemen. Moreover, with his partner, Victor Anstey, Rothatcher was perhaps the largest plantation owner in the South Seas, having under cultivation, to mention a single tract, almost a third of the Island of Tanalao. It was said that Victor Anstey seldom left the hacienda in the midst of the Tanalao estate; while Rothatcher, at least half the year, moved leisurely among the ports from Shanghai down to Singapore, mainland and insular. He had a queer, laughable habit of looking forth from a window in the morning to find out what part of his annual itinerary he had reached on a certain day. Just now it was Manila, his old suite at the Oriente, and he was presently looking for a table down among the palm paths to order his grapes and cheese.

Rothatcher had a brown beard and large blue, still eyes. His darkened face gave them a liquid look, but that was deceptive. He was fifty at least, a heavy man, but his whole body was in commission. He had a way of looking into one's face, as if peering into both eyes at once. His glance did not move from eye to eye, as one's unconsciously does when intent upon another. Instead he fixed upon a sort of invisible spot between and above the eyes. A weak man

felt nailed. There was a certain effrontery in this look, but Rothatcher had long forgotten that.

The venerable Bellamy strolled among the palm paths with Major Worden-Key. Rothatcher called to them to sit down. Bellamy was seventy, probably the best loved man in the Philippines. Fifteen years before, he had been the dean of the chaplains in the regular army. Practically every young man in and out of the service who had made good among the Islands had something to thank Bellamy for. The old man wore white and wore it well. His white beard and moustache almost startled one with their purity. There was not the slightest colouring of tobacco around the mouth or any looseness of life in the fine old face; in fact, there was a lustre to it, wrinkles and all. Worden-Key was the Governor-General's right hand, and as Rothatcher would say, the best part of his chief's brain, as well. He was detached from a cavalry regiment for service at headquarters in Manila, and was almost wearisomely cryptic and quiet. Bellamy and the American officer ordered breakfast at Rothatcher's table.

Somewhat later, a tall young stranger moved past, and turned to glance at the three. He caught Bellamy's eyes, and his narrow, lean face nodded curiously. . . . Rothatcher had just been speaking of Tanalao, which he called the "Ambergris Isle." He halted now, staring at the young man's vanishing legs.

"Go on," said Bellamy.

Rothatcher bit a big waxy grape. There was much gold in his mouth and a small brown mole on his lower lip.

"Tell me more," said Bellamy. "I never heard of such an island——"

"Who's your friend—who just passed?" said Rothatcher.

"Why, that—that's Tom Steepe."

"Ambergris Isle" was not mentioned again. Rothatcher slowly brought his eyes in from the direction the stranger had gone. He chose very carefully another large lopsided grape—a white skin of unfermented wine with a bloomy mist on it and the deep, waxy impressions which its fellows of the stem had made.

"That young man belongs out here," he observed.

"What do you mean?" Worden-Key asked.

"There's only a few white men who belong in these zones."

"A lot of us seem to do very well," the officer said.

"You don't, though."

Both Bellamy and the Major were attentive now.

"You men here don't dream how fast you are wearing out and breaking down," Rothatcher resumed. "You'll go home one day and find yourself an old man among your friends. That young blond with a secret is the sort for this climate. He has the sunlight inside."



Worden-Key shook his head curiously. He didn't even appear to take the offering personally. To him Rothatcher's point was absurd.

"You said something about a secret," Bellamy observed.

"Perhaps you didn't see that, either—something wrong with the young man's insides—a hunted look?"

"Come to think of it, I do recall——" Bellamy checked himself.

Rothatcher turned a long slow look at the elder man, who wasn't so bright afterward. Bellamy had a story, a good story, and seemed unable to resist telling it.

"Is he in trouble somewhere?" Worden-Key asked.

"Oh, no. This was long ago—a most interesting affair—smoothed over years ago. You see, Tom Steepe was here when the fighting was on——"

"You mean the Tagal fighting?" asked Rothatcher.

"Yes."

"But that was years and years ago and he's only a young man now——"

"Twenty-four or five, I should judge," Bellamy said thoughtfully. "Yes, about twice as old now as when I saw him first—a newsboy from Chicago. . . . Do you remember Perry Chase—the American soldier who went over to the niggers?"

Both men nodded. Bellamy was intent on recasting the character in his own mind.

"Perry Chase was a devil," he said with discrimi-

nation. "I won't have to take that back. The American army wanted his capture as much as Aguinaldo's. I remember seeing him trail out of camp back at San Fernando one grey twilit afternoon in the heart of the rains—night lowering in. I was riding with the cavalry then. We were out after Perry Chase behind Colonel Dibdin. Perry, you see, had formerly been one of Dibdin's troopers. That's why Manila gave the old Colonel the opportunity to get the renegade alive. Dibdin wanted to see Perry in a close-up, more than he wanted his woman and children back in Maryland, and he was a one-woman soldier, too. . . . At the close of this grey, wet afternoon, the renegade had the nerve to halt in a shallow set of trenches. As our horses turned into a lane of bamboo entering San Fernando, Perry, with sixty or seventy niggers, opened up on us from the right angle and toppled six or seven men from Dibdin's saddles out of a skeleton-troop of thirty-five—some ratio of casualty in those days."

Bellamy was enjoying himself. Any one of his familiars would have known from across the little plaza that the old man was engaged in a favourite narrative. He revelled in effects. There were subtleties of gesture and intonation—dramatic pauses and certain exquisite mannerisms having to do with the partaking of food—all conducted with the rarest artistry. The tale continued:

"I was back praying with the fallen all that night, while the rain rustled endlessly upon the nipa-thatch overhead. Dibdin had gone on with two squadrons continuing the chase. Serious effort for an old man who had fattened in garrison for thirty years prior to those strenuous doings in Luzon. The fact is that Perry Chase was his obsession; also the loss of the last six or seven troopers pressed down on old Dibdin's brain like a sunken frontal bone. . . . He came back after midnight and sent for me. Death was on the old man. I saw he would have to be lifted if he ever sat a mount again. His consciousness was slowly slipping out, as he lay back on his cot in the candle-light that night.

"I took off his boots and breeches. He wouldn't let even his 'dog-robber' know that the wet saddle-leather had skinned him to the bone. He moaned his hatred for Perry Chase. Something slow and horrible about it all——"

For several moments Bellamy graphically described Colonel Dibdin's story of the night's chase—how Perry had teased them on over leagues of rice paddies, across treacherous rivers in the dark, tiring them out with his own fresher band; how he had spilled part of the troop into an *arroyo* by means of a broken bridge, and left the remainder at last in a *cul-de-sac* of which he apparently had a key.

"Dibdin muttered frequently through the tale that

Perry Chase had a boy with him, 'a white boy,' " Bellamy accentuated. . . . "We bundled the old Colonel back to Manila where he died, as you know—died of exhaustion. Four months afterward Captain Bat Somerville came to Manila after months among the Igorrotes. He had gone over to their country practically alone, Captain Bat had, and swung the Igorrotes in a body to the American arms. Clean and clever piece of work——"

At this point, Bellamy rapidly outlined the ancient cause of enmity between the two chief tribes of Luzon—the bloody feud between the Tagals and Igorrotes, and the value of the latter to the Americans in getting the Island quiet again.

" . . . In any case, Bat announced to us that Perry Chase was hiding out in the Central Canyons and that he believed he could bring him home within two or three weeks. You see, Bat's first Colonel was Dibdin. He confessed a secret liking for the old man and a desire to make the brittle old bones lie more lightly back in Maryland where they grew up. Manila wasn't long in letting Captain Bat have his way. I was in headquarters the morning he got his orders. Bat was feeling so cheerful that he gave me a wink, and a minute later I heard him telling the General that his little Igorrotes could have an awful lot of fun with a white chaplain, if one went along. Before I knew it, I was saying eagerly that it was my

one big dream to go, which makes me know I was younger then."

Bellamy's voice was playing through the ramifications of the tale. The high point was that Perry Chase was captured.

" . . . Bat laughed all that last night," the old man was saying. " . . . I heard some firing out in the jungle before dawn and presently I was sent for. The light was mighty thin when I got to Captain Bat, who was standing there with three or four white officers belonging to his little staff. They were hushed, but Bat's voice had the laugh still in it. I heard him say, 'Step back, fellows, and let Parson have his look-see.'

"I remember once in England, a party of us had cornered a boar in the night and we waited for day-break to get the lance in him——"

"What about that boy?" Rothatcher asked softly.

"We waited for dawn to get the lance in that boar," Bellamy repeated, "and I recall how the big blue beast lay sprawled in a thicket, part of the shadow, until I saw the red, the small red points of hell that were in his eyes. When I had located the eyes, the outline of the whole beast was suddenly pointed off, blue boar against blue shadow. It was so that I looked into the bamboo thickets that morning—the tension so keen that I couldn't see straight at first. It wasn't the eyes that pointed off this time, but Perry Chase's open mouth. Yes, I found myself looking awesomely at

the pale red roof of the renegade's mouth. I never saw such a dome, man, nor sixteen such perfect upper teeth. Perfect in their original enamel, perfect as the mouth of a young hound, a marvellous grace about the whole spare figure, so light and lithe and young. It lay there queerly, pressed into the bamboo-thicket, still as a pheasant. Perhaps you have seen Bat Somerville limp, gentlemen. It was just then that his leg was shattered by a Remington slug from the deep jungle."

"The boy's work, wasn't it?" Rothatcher asked.

Bellamy's glance complimented the other.

"We caught *him*, too, that morning," he added. "A little slip of a saddle-cinch did it. . . . And there was a boy with a heart full of hell, let me tell you. I'll never forget that minute when we led him up to the body of Perry Chase. He halted something as a girl might do, his empty hands groping outward, fingers moving in the strangest tenderness. Then there was a sudden jerk forward as he knelt and touched Perry's throat; then a click of the lad's jaw. The rest was sullen hatred.

"They gave him a lot of years at Bilibid, but I had something to do to make the matter easier. I felt that the Government was ruining the boy; that he had gone with Perry Chase out of love for the man, not because Perry was a deserter against our army. In fact, after six or seven years in prison on the Pasig, we managed to get Tom Steepe clear, but he never

went home to Chicago again. No one could tame the lad, even after he grew into a man——”

“I know the kind,” Rothatcher remarked. “Nothing but a woman can tame his kind.”

## II

### ROUGH EDGES

**T**HERE was a pause, each man at the table lost in himself. It was almost as if Rothatcher had said he knew the woman.

"What is the young chap doing now?" Worden-Key asked.

Seconds passed, no answer. Rothatcher turned toward Bellamy, who appeared suddenly dissatisfied with himself because he had called out this question from the Major.

"I have heard he is with the Sam Yuen people supplying pancake flour to the different American commissaries," the old man answered slowly.

Rothatcher's eyes passed from one to another intently. Worden-Key was less sleepy than before.

"We have been having trouble with pancake flour," he remarked. "A lot of trouble also with commissary sergeants and hospital stewards."

The light had gone out of Bellamy. "I wouldn't jump at any conclusions, Major," he said almost pleadingly. "We have already done a lot of damage to that young man. I'd be sorry if my



little story to-day should awaken an old persecution."

"You wouldn't call it persecution, would you?" Worden-Key asked curiously.

The officer's manner was altogether different. His eyes now held a fine hunting activity, the face tighter, leaner, more pointed. Bellamy turned to Rothatcher, who was smiling coolly at him. The old man had ceased to enjoy the effect of his morning's coffee. Perhaps he saw from the cool smile that he had once more gratified his own ancient weakness of telling too much. Something he had said had connected with a certain departmental crookedness in Worden-Key's mind. The conscienceless Rothatcher was laughing at them both, as he sank his finger-nails into a slice of lemon and dipped them into a bowl of water which his Malay held. He declined a smoke and arose, his hand for a moment touching the shoulder of the old man.

"It's been a happy hour," he said.

For a moment in the hotel, Rothatcher talked softly with the American manager; then walked up the broad stairway to his quarters. Fifteen minutes later a servant led Tom Steepe up the same stairway. . . . The two white men did not speak for a moment. Tom Steepe had to look down a trifle to meet the other's glance. There was something of insolence in his manner, yet his eyes laughed.

"You are through with the firm of Sam Yuen, I hear?" Rothatcher said.

"I haven't sent in a formal resignation."

"You'd better telephone it then. . . . Bellamy is breaking down in this climate. His mind is fallen to little things."

"Bellamy did me a grand turn once," Tom Steepe said quickly.

"He didn't do you a good turn this morning." Rothatcher smiled; his big hands lifted toward the other as he added: "He didn't mean to hurt you. It was something he said to Worden-Key, who is bloodhound, pure-bred."

"You sent a hotel servant after me. What do you want?" Steepe asked abruptly.

"You know who I am?"

"Of course."

"I don't want anything with you," Rothatcher answered, "so far as the American Government goes. I might say we haven't anything in common in this archipelago. If I should see you on the street, I wouldn't know you—anywhere on this Island of Luzon."

Tom Steepe's eyes held the other with a kind of grim regard. "I might remark," he said gently, "that I could get along whether you bowed or not."

"Are you sure you could—to-day?" Rothatcher asked. "Your old friend, Bellamy, did not mean to be indiscreet this morning, but he said something that started the wheels in Worden-Key's mind. If you were to break open that officer's skull you would find

cards and numbers and little brass wheels. He isn't human, he's a mechanism."

"You said he was a bloodhound."

"Yes, and he means to run you down. Just now his nose is on your trail. Have you any family?"

The other smiled with irony. "No, but I dislike being hustled out of town."

"You dislike Bilibid?"

"I wouldn't go back there."

Tom Steepe made no particular external display of strength, but the weight of his last sentence was felt in the room. It was pathetic, too, because it meant that Steepe would die first, doubtless to the American garrison's entire unconcern. Still Rothatcher perceived that Uncle Sam hadn't enough soldiers to put this young man back in the river-pen alive. He liked him better every minute, for purposes of his own.

"You've got friends in the interior, I've heard," Rothatcher observed.

Tom Steepe shook his head.

"Why, I've heard you are held high among the natives, even by the Chinese."

"I was thinking of white men," Tom said quietly.

"You might keep out of Worden-Key's way, if you reached the Central Canyons," Rothatcher suggested.

"Bellamy always loved to tell that story—about the Central Canyons," Steepe said whimsically. . . .

"But I don't feel right, deep inland, any longer," he muttered after a moment. "I have to keep somewhere

in the smell of the sea. I don't breathe right with a lot of land locked around me. I think I'd better be going. I don't seem to get on with you, but I'm taking it as a favour that you put me straight."

"I wouldn't go, if I were you."

The other turned to him coldly.

"I don't mean I am detaining you, only by suggestion," Rothatcher said. "I don't often take up a young chap and set him going—not nearly so often as Belamy does. I use a lot of different-coloured young persons, chiefly male, who don't know me personally."

Tom Steepe glanced across insolently now. "You are a bit fat on yourself, aren't you?"

Rothatcher laughed. "Have a little touch of somewhat?" He asked, opening a desk-drawer buffet. "There isn't much to choose from here, but I think we have a good reason for not calling a servant just now."

Tom Steepe drank a stimulant unappreciatively. Rothatcher had found no weakness on this point.

"What do you know of Ambergris Isle?" the latter asked.

"I heard it mentioned as I passed your table a while ago."

"I saw you look up at the name. But what do you know?"

"Not much. 'Ambergris Isle'—it's sort of in the air—the other name for Tanalao. I've heard you've got big interests down there, and that you want more."

"Queer, the name should be, as you say—in the air," Rothatcher mused. "Queer, you should hear me speak the name. I didn't speak loud. I believe—I believe you belong down there. I believe I could use you down there."

"What doing?"

"I trust you a lot, but not enough to answer that. There's ambergris, for one thing, and there's a stubborn old Islander named Scarbaran—and there's—ah, remarkable sets of scenery——"

"To stage a war?"

"Yes, and there's a Monk from South America," Rothatcher added genially. "There's a place there for you, too, Mr. Steepe. My ship, the *Singmaster*, is leaving for the Southern Islands at midnight——"

There was a knock at the door. Rothatcher shoved Steepe toward the inner room.

"You'd better decide something," he whispered.

The young man slowly inclined his head. "I'll do as you say to-day—at least, to-day."

The other walked to the door, opened it and faced a Malay servant who inquired for Tom Steepe.

"He's been gone a half hour," said Rothatcher.

Tom had not moved.

"The more I live, the less need I perceive for many words," Rothatcher remarked, as he came back. "You'll have to stay in hiding until night."

Steepe shook his head. "Two or three things I have to tend to," he objected.

"In ten minutes I can furnish twenty people to perform any services for you, even expert service."

"These are matters for me alone."

"But Worden-Key has Manila already on the lookout for you."

"Possibly——"

"Worden-Key does this sort of thing very well."

Tom bowed. "I think I could get aboard your ship by midnight."

Rothatcher rarely lost his temper, but the younger man's personality wore him to the quick just now.

"Don't you see it would spoil everything, if Worden-Key——"

"I'm not working for you yet, Rothatcher!"

The elder man recovered himself and laughed.

"I don't know whether I shall work for you or not," Steepe continued.

Rothatcher's back was turned for a moment. When he looked around again, his smile was even more genial.

"Do it your way," he said.

"There's a stretch of two hundred feet of river-front fenced off in front of Sam Yuen's main go-down," Steepe resumed. "Have the *Singmaster* send a boat up the Pasig for me there at eleven o'clock to-night."

Rothatcher whistled. "They must love you at Sam Yuen's, if they let you keep a warehouse key."

"I get along rather well with the Chinese," Tom remarked.

"I'll have word about your coming to Captain Corn,"

Rothatcher said reflectively. "I want you to like Captain Corn. He's my skipper on the *Singmaster*. That craft is one of my pets, and he's the man for her. I'd like to go aboard with you to-night, but they are using me over in Hong Kong five days from now. There will be a letter for you with Captain Corn on the *Singmaster*. She lies far out toward Corregidor. Meanwhile run along and attend your commissions and be damned to you—if you don't give Manila the slip."

### III

#### LAST DAY IN MANILA

**T**OM STEEPE leaned back in a *carometa* with curtains drawn, while the ponies under whip clattered along the cobblestones of the Escolta. Poor old Bellamy had not known what he did. Tom realised perfectly, from what Rothatcher had told him, that Worden-Key was putting the parts of a big commissary scandal together. The Sam Yuen company wouldn't be touched, but he, Tom Steepe, would catch it from both ends. First he stopped at the Hong Kong bank; then was driven to his own quarters in San Sebastian Plaza. It wasn't for baggage that he took this chance on entering his rooms, but for a keepsake—a big unset cameo of creamy chalcedony. He had a gambler's superstition in small things. Years ago that cameo had been the luck-piece of Perry Chase. As he passed the bank on the way down again, he saw Worden-Key enter.

The *carometa* then drove him back to the Bridge of Spain and crossed to the Old City. Tom made a brief call on a girl in a walled garden. It appeared that he had promised to drive to-night with this girl on



the Luneta, and he had come to tell her it was impossible. Noon was passed. Tom Steepe had not seen the young woman before, at this hour of day. She had not been up long. There was a high sun and a variety of red flowers in the garden, but life was desolate between them. The man looked as if he were marking off on some inner scroll the record of another false step. . . . High noon, red flowers, a petulant up-turned face. Another cuticle scratch.

The little vehicle then took him to the stately offices of the Sam Yuen Company, where he dealt with a nervous Englishman for forty-five minutes, without getting angry. Later, across the river among the Chinese go-downs, Tom had a low discussion with an army purchasing-agent, who carried a still-drunk in a balanced and practised fashion. This American had the rank of Captain. He became livid and drained at the last. There were two or three other brief conferences of this indefinite, yet wretched quality, in the next three hours.

Tom's sudden departure left them in a nasty position. It was sick crooked business all around, and does not really enter this history. Tom was utterly tired of it. His own part was not altogether clean. . . . As he was driven down the Escolta the last time toward four in the afternoon, he saw Worden-Key emerging from a branch office of the Sam Yuen Company. The cord was tightening, but not rapidly enough. Worden-Key had not seen the need of haste.

The Commissary Department didn't dream, yet, how much of it had been hurt.

Tom paid the driver, and actually walked through the crowd for two or three short squares to enter a quiet sidedoor in Barset's Lane, where a Chinese took his hat. He was safe, for the present, in club rooms of the Tong Plenum Tai Ming. Officially, the American Government knew nothing of the existence of this establishment. Tom Steepe was one of four white men admitted to the inner folds; and this had come about through his peculiar relation to the Sam Yuen Company.

It had been a queer day. Life was queer to Tom Steepe, anyway. There was a twisted smile around his lips, as he dined alone in the midst of a set of stork screens. The place was like a deep tropical pool with feathered ancients standing in silence around the margin. Tom brooded leisurely through the elaborate dinner. He sometimes felt in good company when alone. . . . Ambergris Isle. . . . Rothatcher with his bunch of grapes and the whisper about him of vast financial affairs. . . . Rothatcher losing his temper, turning his back for a moment to get control of himself. Tom had seen all this and more. No one ever guessed how much Tom Steepe saw, or how he "twigged" little mannerisms. Even his great friend, the astute Chinese at the top of the Sam Yuen Company, didn't know the man who had worked for him. . . . Tom smiled. Life had roughed him enough to

leave him jagged. No one, certainly not Rothatcher, could ride over him—and not find it out.

The twisted smile widened. It would be interesting to play with the bearded fox. Perhaps from time to time a bit of real work might be called forth. There was a good deal of brute left in Tom Steepe, far more than he himself dreamed, but the fact remained that life, up to this point, had not called forth anything like the real stuff he had.

He was a bit genial with himself this night. No dinner table in the archipelago was comparable with the Tai Ming board. There was a wine that Tom Steepe would have called for, if only to see it in the glass. He drank little or nothing, but there was a deep sparkle in the heart of this slender crystal that was like the *genii* of the fairy tales, no less. . . . He had roamed the South Seas and made himself at home in many Islands, but there was an indescribable tang to the loneliness which the sparkle and bouquet of this wine always brought. The fragrance had something poignantly to do with some one's lips and hair. . . . All of which is a secret slant at Tom Steepe—this glimpse of him behind the stork-screen.

Later in the evening, still at the Tai Ming, he had a brief talk with an aged oriental, one of the directors of the Sam Yuen Company, who offered his most private and select carriage to reach the Company's go-down on the Pasig. It would be an achievement to reach the decks of Rothatcher's ship without

brushing one of the innumerable eyes and fingers, Malay and American, of Major Worden-Key's working force; and yet the young man ordered his driver to circle the Luneta during the last hour of his stay in the city. In the sumptuous shadows of the director's carriage, Tom even cared to listen to some of the later selections of the evening's musical offering and saw, for a last time, the men and maidens of all lands with their fancy turnouts under mellow, misty stars. His vehicle, so obviously Chinese, doubtless helped him to reach the Sam Yuen go-down in the Old City by the river mouth.

He crossed the walk from the carriage, unlocked the office door, leaving it ajar, and passed back the key to the coachman. The carriage moved away and Tom Steepe reëntered the building, now shutting the door behind him. The city part of the getaway was accomplished. It was now up to the sailors from the *Singmaster*. He had passed through the dim offices and the pitch-black go-down proper to the wharf, leaving the door open to the water-front, in case he should be driven back for shelter in the warehouse.

Three or four minutes to wait before eleven. Tom stood in the darkness on the heavy planking, and the big oily river rushed by less than three feet below. He hated Manila, ached to get away; still it irked his pride to be hurried off by Worden-Key's activity. The Major represented numbers to Tom Steepe, blind, stubborn numbers. In long-ago days, an outlaw boy

had tried to beat himself to death against numbers, against the whole American army. The young man now preferred to use his head, instead of his body.

He heard the steady cramp of two or three rowlocks, the *Singmaster's* long boat, doubtless, as the cathedral bells struck eleven far back in the city. It looked as if the craft were about to make the private wharf without molestation. Tom could see the outlines of the sailors' backs and hear the guttural orders of the boatswain. He struck a match and held it to his lips as if lighting a cigarette. There was a moment's silence, as the boat slid in toward the planking. Then from downstream a shrill whistle sounded; immediately after a high-pitched voice, the voice of native river-police, calling the long boat to halt and pull around for examination. Tom saw that the sailors meant to take him in spite of the police. He heard the low orders of the *Singmaster's* boatswain, as his craft neatly grazed the piles of the wharf:

"Listen," whispered Tom.

"'Ow now?" said Bos'n.

The face vaguely turned up was dull red in the starlight. Tom talked rapidly:

"There's a boat full of native police coming. They'd overhaul us before we got half way. Listen sharp, and do as I say. Pull around and drift down for them to look you over. Say you are carrying mail to the post-office and coming right back. Come down the river again in twenty minutes, but don't stop here.

Pick me up at the P. & O. buoy. That's her lantern swinging out there—far out there."

Tom pointed to a faint white arc, low on the water, a half mile out in the harbour, which marked the anchorage of P. & O. steamers.

The police whistle sounded again, the call imperative.

"Do I 'ear you're meanin' to swim for it?" said Bos'n.

"Yes. They'll look you over when you come downstream again. I'll be at the buoy in a half hour. Hurry now and ease that little Malay's noggin."

Tom stepped back among the boxes. He heard Bos'n answer the hail of the police-boat and the ominous rumbles of explanation that followed. . . . At last the *Singmaster's* boat continued her way up river, the police boat resuming her patrol. Tom took off his trousers, coat, shoes and hat and fastened his valuables in a cloth to his belt. He found half a foot of loose steel grating and tied these outer garments to it, sinking the whole into the river. Then he stepped back and clicked shut the warehouse door that he had left open; no need for shelter there. After that he let himself down into the water and struck out in the general direction of the swinging light which was lost to his eyes from the water level.

Tom chuckled. He would need a bath after this warm lave of the Pasig. He fancied he could smell the steamy heart of Luzon now, in the midst of its chief drain—hemp fields, the muck of rice lands, the empty-

ing of the native towns—all carried with him out to the tolerant sea.

It was rather fruity at close quarters. A hard grin came to his lips as he recalled that Bilibid was only a mile upstream. The river flowed past the canebrakes of the city pen—the soft fresh, yet dirty waters, he had smelled so often. The current ceased to grip him, as the river broadened and dissolved into the open salty stretch of the harbour. This far, the sharks came. Tom lunged a bit until he got his nerves in order against the thought. The big harbour scavengers doubtless would be as disinclined for association as he, but it was difficult to keep that thought in mind. He bored into a small island of floating ashes—lye and a steamer's evil smell—then a more buoyant stretch of straight brine.

He swam until he tired and freshened again, ready for a night's grill, if necessary. Finally he kicked himself shoulder-clear of the water and spied the anchorage light.

It occurred now that there might be an ugly waiting time ahead. He remembered clearly how high the buoy stood from the water and how slimy she was. A man standing up in a small boat could barely touch the ring. This meant dalliance in deep water until the *Singmaster's* long boat hove in. . . . It was worse than he thought. The metal base of the big ball was deep-soft with slime, and there was a voice around it, a softly insane vibration from the pressures in and



out and below, a slow nodding lurch from time to time, like some big fish pulling at a giant cork.

Tom had a time with himself in the next hour or so. He treaded water around it, utterly nauseated by the breath of the harbour, the settling basin of a vast and dirty island. The moment came when he would have preferred to let go and sink, rather than to swim within ten feet of that soughing furry horror of a buoy. Once he laughed at it, laughed aloud and the thing seemed to call back at him. The thought became really attractive to let go and sink. At the same time he knew he wouldn't. A man has to wear through all the sheaths of panic and fatigue before he finds himself. Tom Steepe had done this in early days; he could do it again. He knew he could make it back to the city if he had to; that there was stuff in him to keep on swimming, after all the ordinary lights flickered out in his head. He was gasping a bit on his back and wondering which-was-which among the stars, when the row-locks creaked again.

"She twittered at me," he mumbled, as the hand of the hairy Bos'n drew him in.

"She wot?" growled the voice.

"She twittered at me," Steepe's voice repeated, "like water in an empty skull. Look at her."

The Bos'n sniffed like a horse not sure of a bridge-planking. Tom lay over the gunwale like a broken reed.

"I tell you she ruckled at me," his voice droned.



"Stow that, for Paul's sake—stow that!" exploded Bos'n, lifting and smoothing the lean figure at the same time.

Tom was in his arms now—good dry smell of well-soaped woollen clothing, a breast with a beam like the clinker-built long boat. Tom sighed and was glad as a little boy to be there. He knew nothing more until they reached the *Singmaster's* ladder—Bos'n carrying him up. It was just there, in the ray of the green starboard light, that Tom Steepe, half-unconscious, saw the face of all days to him—a face that leaned over the railing, peered into his, and quickened to life all the vague magic of the mystical Tai Ming wine.

## IV

### THE GREEN LIGHT STRANGER

**T**OM leaned his head back on the boatswain's spacious shoulder, and was carried to a cabin, Bos'n put him down and would have lingered, except for the diminutive officer in blue broadcloth who had followed him in. Tom's mind was still partly blurred. There was one thing that he had to get straight. He sat up, brushed his brow with his hand, and inquired of the stranger:

"Did you see her?"

Even as he spoke, his eyes fixing upon the face of the officer in the room, Tom decided that he didn't care to go on with the subject.

"Meaning whom?" the officer asked.

"The liner we just passed," he answered.

"We didn't, Mr. Steepe. You must have passed her exclusively."

"I passed it all," he remarked, feeling his wet hair, and added, "Oh, I say, I can't live with myself like this—are you the Skipper?"

The little man confessed that he was.

"I still smell the Pasig."

"Your bath is already drawn, Mr. Steepe."

Hours afterward, again in the cabin, Steepe awakened to feel the throb of engines. A scarlet-edged dawn was streaming into the square windows of the *Singmaster's* guest cabin. Right there, life began all over afresh. It wasn't a bunk that he lay in, but a narrow brass bed bolted to the planking, under a deep gold-brown carpet. He breathed the immaculate day-break blowing in from a softly-playing sea. Lying very still, a swift review of yesterday's activities passed. The harbour adventure was slowly regarded. The curse of it was washed away, except for a faint odour lingering in his nostrils, as if certain cells deep in the tissue were still holding tangible memories of the Island basin. Tom's mind presently attached itself to the boatswain of the *Singmaster*—friendly and hairy, but with a curiously capacious heart to dwell in. Once before he had lain in a man's arms like that—years ago, when he was hard hit by a bullet from a Krag rifle, during a running fight among the Central Canyons of Luzon. Big Perry Chase had pulled him over to his own saddle. . . .

Now the little velvety captain person entered his mind again—a flawlessly complete, yet diminished edition of a man, both small and slender at the same time; under five feet, yet not even remotely dried or dwarf-like, a sparkle to his eyes and teeth, a sparkle from his linen and red shoes, sparkle from the diamond on his hand and the studs in his shirt, the nap of the

broadcloth uniform all brushed the same way. "Captain Corn," Tom muttered to himself, recalling that Rothatcher had spoken well of the little man. Tom felt somehow that this was to be a good day. The idea of another soapy bath and breakfast was attractive, the cleansing sea winds afterwards, and the general sense of well-being from finding himself on ship again. Just now the rest of the picture reeled off.

All had been blithe and trivial to this point, but life became instantly electric. The face in the green starboard light returned to his mind. He knew the reason for this new relish for the day, the new flavours in the air. To think that he could have lain awake ten minutes and not remembered her. Doubtless somebody else's woman.

That day he did not see her. The next day was slowly expanding itself. Tom had combed and carded the compactest ship of his considerable experience; his sharp eyes had taken in the *Singmaster* from her emergency steering-gear, under tarpaulin aft of the main deck, to the pair of sizable hooks and the coiled chains above the forecastle. He had smoked and talked with Captain "Gnat" Corn, and been followed about, so far as the laws of seafaring men permitted, by the vast-bodied boatswain who apparently cherished him in a long-lost fashion and was always fascinated by some mystery connected with the P. & O. buoy. Tom had played to that, having overheard Bos'n relating to a shipmate under the forward crane-boom:

“ . . . An’ he says, says he, ‘green an’ furry, green an’ furry, an’ she ruckled at me.’ Now wot do you s’pose he meant—’arf drowned in that stir-about, when we got there?”

They were below the Pindanui Passage in one of the southern clusters of the Philippine Archipelago, when Tom Steepe concluded it had been hallucination—that face in the green light. Otherwise she must have gone ashore at the last moment before sailing. He was standing forward at the time of reaching this conclusion, staring ahead at the softly swaying seas. The winds were warm but empty, and the rays of the sun were sinking into his neck. Sea and sky took on a loneliness and isolation, even in the vivid light, that one can only feel down in those waters, where the ocean stretches half-way across the world. But just as one of Captain Corn’s chow-boys gonged the decks for tea that second afternoon, the door of a promenade-cabin opened as Tom Steepe passed, and the face was before him again.

Her eyes were startled. She bent to pass on, but seemed to think better of that and bore Tom Steepe’s look with a smile not to be interpreted.

“Are you all right after the long swim in the harbour?” she asked.

For a second or two he didn’t answer. It seemed he was hearing the tea-gong again. It had an inimitable tone—the answer of a tap with a soft chamois clapper. One heard it in any part of either deck,

yet had to strain to pick it out from the breeze three yards away. It had something to do with a twanging of insects one never can locate—a note which was at least half out of the human register. It had been in his ears when she appeared; the high soft strumming seemed set now to go on always.

“I thought it must be a mistake—I thought my eyes hoaxed me——” he said at last.

“You mean—now?”

“No—the other night when they carried me up the ladder. Were you really there?”

“I really was.”

“But where have you been since then?”

“Resting.”

Tom reflected that the sea had been calm as a lagoon. Her colour and freshness were that of one who had never known illness, much less been recently sea-sick.

“I have seen you walking by my door many times,” she added. “My cabin-door has been ajar. It has been wonderful to lie still and breathe deep for two whole days. . . . I was just going to have tea.”

It was more than he could ask. The Chinese brought a table, a little pot and a big cosy. The red-gold of the late afternoon was in the thin, shell-like cups when the tea was poured. The man's heart was chasing a golden dream while his mind took part in desultory dialogue. All began to move with smoothness and order until Tom realised that he was covered

in but two white garments, one of which might have been the boatswain's and the other Captain Corn's; that he was without stockings, in loose Chinese slippers. He began to explain:

"But I understand," she said. "Was I not in the green light? There are no other women passengers."

"Do you live down here?" he asked presently.

She shook her head. "I have never been below Manila before."

"Where are you going?"

"Tanalao."

Tom was about to say he was going there, too, since Rothatcher's letter had advised this much. Instead he dropped the words reflectively, "Ambergris Isle."

She looked shoreward, something like joy in her eyes, but offered no comment. Now Tom fell to thinking how he must have looked to her first under the green light—dank from wrestling with that hag of a buoy, in knee-length underwear, ashes in his hair. Then from her profile, he drew a curious conception. Her eyes and forehead belonged to Asia, but the mouth was fashioned by both East and West. Calm and wisdom, yet something of the lure and languor of the Orient, were in her eyes and brow. The mouth carried out the effect of all this, but it was also finished with the decisive lines of action as well. It was a face that forbade his impulses to ask questions. The moments sped on. The cups and the tea-pot were taken away. The sun lay low in the sky like a Syrian

urn. In the southern shadows there was a movement of dim fleeces as if the shepherds were driving home the flocks from the hill pastures above Nazareth.

For the first time since the table had been taken away, she leaned forward a little toward him. Tom spoke after silence:

"Shall we go to dinner together—that is—later?"

"I think after this—for the rest of the day, I'd like to be alone."

Tom again remembered the clothes he wore. It would have been impossible anyway. The sun had gone down; the afterglow a winey suffusion in the sky. His face was fixed toward the deeper shadows. The hill country above Nazareth was lost in night now.

"Every little while, I like to be alone," she added rising.

The dusk was thick upon Tom's face, something pained about it, as it turned from the horizon and uplifted to hers.



## V

### CAPTAIN CORN'S CABIN

**T**OM sat alone in the dusk. Something of himself had gone with her. All that mattered, all that he wanted, was to see her again. . . . Certainly new and different she was, answering subtle curfews and invisible signals for her delicate senses alone. She hadn't thought of his absence of dinner clothes any more than he had, when deciding against dinner with him. He was sure of that. She had known when to quit and how to say so.

The dinner-gong sounded. Tom, still sitting on the deck, became conscious of a strangeness in the air. It was the sudden hush from the smoking-room, instead of the rattle of talk and loose laughter which had come forth from there so long as to become a kind of curse of monotony. Three white men had been in there and they were going to dinner now, the chief event of the day. Tom was about to enter his cabin when a passing figure hailed him. It was Bos'n with a hand to his cap, and a reproachful look which the other did not understand at once.

"Bli' me, it's awful, but I tell you awful, the wye

the boys in the fo'c'stle 'as tyken a caulk agin' you. Some of 'em 'eard wot you said out there by the P. & O. buoy and they're swearin' this 'ere's a Jonah trip. Now wot was it as was eatin' you, sir, out there in the float?"

Tom laughingly disclaimed the slightest memory. Bos'n looked back and forward, as if to be sure of secrecy, but even then found it hard to reveal another heaviness on his mind. Tom drew at length that it was a warning; that the reproachful look had to do with Bos'n's pain that Tom should have whiled two hours away with a strange woman. The warning was not directed against this woman, but against all women who go to sea and waylay innocent-meaning males on all decks at all hours.

Part of that night was spent with Captain Corn in the latter's cabin. Tom discovered that the little man wore round cuffs. This forgotten custom had bothered Tom's eyes a long time without his knowing exactly why. They were fiercely starched and a-shine, and reminded one of a certain circus poster of long-ago ages, in which a dwarf sat in state upon his platform—square-toed boots and round, glazed cuffs. Tom silently at first, and steadily afterward, checked his desire to ask questions about the woman, finally turning the talk to Ambergris Isle.

"You know as much about her as anybody else, Mr. Steepe," the Captain began teasingly. "A man would have to have second-sight to know any more about

Ambergris Isle than you do. Maybe she's just a new kind of game of cards. Maybe she's just where the whales lie up and die, on their passages around the world 'From Greenland's icy mountains, to India's coral strand.' ”

He hummed the last and added:

“Maybe I have been there a whole lot of times; maybe I was born there. Listen——”

He leaned forward and held up a small white hand. Louder and looser the racket of voices reached them from the smoking-room forward. Captain “Gnat” chuckled.

“They think they're drinking *col chiquot* in there. They had me fill a bin with *col chiquot* for this passage. I had some aboard—yes, some wine that could be sold for a price, but I surmised they didn't know *col chiquot* from a second rate *virtutem*. They talked so much I thought I'd try them. The steward is cleaning up three dollars gold, every time you hear a cork pop, simply because they talked so much. . . . Gents of the big loot stuff, with a jeanful of American dollars, going to steal Rothatcher's Ambergris Isle—jeanful of dollars and a hideful of cheap *virtutem* and making a noise on our peaceful Pacific. Now you and I, Mr. Steepe, are going to open a little bottle of *col chiquot* right here and now, with nobody to disturb our degustations and everything paid for.”

Tom swallowed. He looked out through the open door to the moon-tracked sea and back at the glossy

little fiend before him, smiling coolly and smelling as sweet as a New England garden. Captain "Gnat" leaned forward again across the polished table:

"I saw you talking to her this afternoon——"

His eye was bright and hard as a game-bird's.

Tom changed the subject. "What does the crowd in the smoking-room know of Rothatcher's Island?" he asked.

"Maybe they know more about it than I do. Maybe Rothatcher has told them about Ambergris Isle. You never can tell what Rothatcher will do next. Most careless man in talking about his business. Seems as if he couldn't stop. Maybe they're going down to take the Island away from Rothatcher. You can take anything from old Blue Beard—if you go about it just right. . . . Some little pink party she is, isn't she now?"

"What's that?" Tom asked.

"Your friend—you joined her just after the tea-gong."

Tom changed the subject again. He shivered to think he had been tempted almost to ask questions. The *col chiquot* was brought. The little man was proud about his tastes. Tom drank, getting colder and colder. In a way it was like spending the evening with a precocious but perverted child. You never could tell what atrocious whim the next moment would bring forth. There would have been a sort of cold enjoyment at the evening's revelation of character,

had the woman not been on board. She made everything personal. The blunt blue bottle of *col chiquot* was drained. Captain "Gnat" sat back, hands falling loosely over the arms of his chair, face upturned, lips parted, eyelids trailing shut.

"Feel it?" he said suddenly.

Tom shook his head.

"Feel that, sir?" the Captain repeated.

"What?"

"The wine in your veins?"

Tom did not deign to reply.

"Did you ever see one of these little Islands after an eight months' drouth—hills all brown, even the canyons smelling like a dry kiln—eight months' steady burning and then the monsoon? Feel it in your veins now—just like the soft first rains stealing in to make a night of it, the hills lying up naked in the dark, naked and listening and kind of insane all at once?"

"I think I have," Tom said slowly.

"That's her—that's *col chiquot*. We'll have another. And they're in there—drinking rain-water and raspberries——"

. . . It was long afterward.

"Listen," said Captain "Gnat."

Tom nodded.

"Listen here, I'm going to do something for you! I like you, white man. I'm going to sing for you. Now."

His dark head bent back at once. He began humming to himself to get the lilt. His hard, light eyes fed on Tom's face. He had that appalling air of complete self-possession that characterises the very stupid and very clever. Suddenly he burst into song. It was an old, old tune called, "Dinorah." Tom had heard it many times among the Islands, but the little Captain amazed him with his singing. Up, up, up went the bell-like tenor, thin and cruel and soulless, dancing lightly as a flame in sunlight. . . . For a return call, the Captain sang "The Song Bird," but turned that vaudeville standby into tuneful rockets that burst in brassy showers.

Tom came out of it as out of a trance. He recalled less of the singing than of the person of the Captain himself, sitting there, blend of fiend and woman and child.

"The little beast," he muttered to himself, ready to leave, and fell to wondering why Corn was out here in the empty ocean, so far from the audiences that ached for his sort of thing back in the world. . . . All the entertainment Tom could stand for one evening. He was reeling, but not in the slightest from the wine.

"Oh, I say, she has a way with her, hasn't she?" Captain "Gnat" resumed abruptly when his guest was at the door.

He received no answer, but went on:

"Maybe she will be out for breakfast. Maybe I gave her the right-hand seat when she wanted the left.

Most people like the Captain's table. Maybe she will use her own chair to-morrow."

"Good night and thanks," said Tom. "I'm looking for my front-door now. It's long after curfew for me."

## VI

### HIS BAD BRINGING-UP

**H**E was standing in the green starboard light where he had seen her first—standing quiet and alone and had been so for many minutes. There had been a second talk with her at tea-time this afternoon. She had the character-thing, he was thinking. He had never seen any one quite like her. Again he had forgotten to inquire her name; and there had been no moment just right in which he could ask why she did not appear in the dining-salon, nor in fact why she was aboard the *Singmaster*.

**Tom** had fought all the way up. It was only recently in his career that he had begun to get himself in hand. His early years had been jungle-wild, Chicago jungles, Luzon jungles. After the death of Perry Chase, shut away in Bilibid, he had known what hatred meant, learning the lessons of still violence. The white men of the Islands left him alone for a bad-tempered beast after his release. It was generally understood that Steepe had been spoiled in the making.

Confinement had taught him to use his head. Still this head-stuff hadn't been taking him straight. This



woman had made him see that. There were things he couldn't tell her about the recent Manila days. . . . She knew Rothatcher. Tom's mind whipped back to the table under the palms at Manila and the room upstairs in the Oriente. For an instant it was almost as if the big bearded one were here in the dark, limned in the green light. It was a kind of suffocating nearness for a second.

Rothatcher was in everything. He linked Tom's mind with the past in Manila, and was mysteriously adjusted to life ahead because of Ambergris Isle. The *Singmaster* appeared to be his private cruiser; Captain Corn came and went in Rothatcher's consciousness. Rothatcher seemed to be stringing along the three white men in the smoking-room; the sailors were on his pay-roll and Tom's own career somehow was to be cramped or smoothed by the whim of the big trader. This thought heated the young man's emotions. He, Tom Steepe, might be enticed, but never even subtly coerced. His fingers tightened, and the old fighting instinct stood forth again, the hate of the outlaw, all the craft and fury of one who has stood with his back to the wall ready to fight the world.

There was a smell of land in the air. Some island near on the starboard quarter was softly exhaling the breath of tea lands and orange groves. Tom wanted to go ashore. The sky was like oiled silk, the moon not yet risen. Canopus alone was shining above and the big Cross trailing forward in the far mists. The soft

air seemed to come from the very core of the South, utterly feminine in its lure as the island breath, calling with something of the same general vibration as the woman was calling to him now. Tom did not know which drew him more—the southern ocean or this mysterious and nameless island on the starboard. . . .

“Hello.”

He did not turn. He thought it some magic of the night, but unquestionably there was a touch on his arm. His left hand lifted and moved over until it touched her hand.

“I couldn’t believe it. I was just thinking of you,” he said.

“Perhaps that’s what brought me.”

“I was just wondering which I wanted more—the little dark island out yonder or the straight open sea ahead.”

“The straight open water.”

“Don’t *you* want ever to stop?” he asked strangely.

She laughed and seemed to know his mood. “Yes, but not now. Not the little island now.”

He was silent.

“You have been standing here long?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“It was so quiet—I dared to come out.”

Her glance had turned up through the dark of the bridge where Captain “Gnat” was on duty. Tom suddenly understood. She had not ventured on deck until Captain Corn had taken the bridge and the three white

men were deep in their poker game. No doubt now, she had found the *Singmaster* hard to bear—the only woman passenger. She had taken her place in the beginning at the Captain's table. Doubtless once had been enough. A gust of gladness raced through Tom's veins that she had found him fit to have tea with. He meant to keep her from ever being sorry for that. Absolutely, he meant it that moment. For once a woman's faith wouldn't be broken. . . .

The little island breathed again. The woman's voice seemed to come from the shadowy orange groves. The ocean air was all balm and caress.

"It was great of you to come out just now," he whispered. "I could hardly believe it at first. It seemed we were talking together—over on the dark island—then your hand upon my sleeve!"

She had taken it away. He saw her face and the strange sweetness of her smile in the green lantern's ray. It maddened him somehow that she had taken her hand away. It was like something that had wounded him to the death long ago—the first breath of separation. Her face was turned back from the ray and the smile enveloped him—some icy uncertainty around the lips.

"You wouldn't push on to the polar sea, would you?" he laughed. "Oh, I say, wouldn't it be better to stay on the little island than that? . . . Come closer."

She did not answer.

He had caught her hand, and had refused to take the warning from the fact of its limpness.

"Oh, we'd have to stop at *one* of the islands," he whispered, drawing her in to him. "You've got me, don't you see it—got me fast?"

She had not spoken, only pushed herself from him.

His hands dropped from her. They stared at each other, faces livid. She had not resisted—a cold lifeless creature in his arms. The thing he had done began to hurt him now. She had given him a deadly rebuke in her quiet way.

"I'm sorry—" he muttered.

Her voice was clear and calm and gentle, but the antarctic cold was in it:

"I'm sorry, too. I made a mistake. I thought you could be different from them——"

She pointed toward the smoking-room where the three white men played. Then she raised her hand to the bridge, and added:

"I thought you could be different from him."

## VII

### TOM FIGHTS HIMSELF

**H**IS watch on the dresser pointed to eleven-ten when he reached the cabin, but there was no meaning to that. The hands had been halted at that familiar angle, since the immersion in Manila Bay, when he had wrapt the time-piece with the rest of his small valuables in a cloth and made it fast to his belt. . . . The mirror showed him a stranger with whitish eyes, the most hateful face he ever looked at, which is invariably a man's own. Whitish eyes, all life and light drained out. That which had been blue had become less colourless, even than grey—the white look of insanity. The ship's bells sounded midnight.

Tom Steepe was whipped—the worst beating life had given him thus far. He had done the one thing he hated most. She had trusted him—chosen him of the whole ship. Hurt in the dining saloon, doubtless hurt on deck the first day, yet she had taken a chance that he, Tom Steepe, had managed to preserve a bit of white man's traditional quality. He had betrayed that. It was when she had taken her hand from his sleeve that he had fallen into some ancient madness.

Tom shuddered. Her body had been in his arms, but the real life wasn't in it. A blow, a scream, voiced hatred in a sentence, would have been a childish expedient of resistance compared to the sublimated punishment she had used. Now he *knew* he had not met such a woman before. Through the years, he had dared to dream of a real woman after all roving, after all hate and fight and wastrelism. She had come—and gone. He had failed. It was like a man missing his Messiah.

He went to the door; the quickened night wind went by from the South. It was dank. Not a star showed. Big golden Canopus and the Southern Cross were lost now in folds of oiled silk. . . . Coldly he hated the dirty looseness of the Islands that continually tease a man to forget himself—hard drink, soft climate. He grew colder with hatred for blaming the Islands and not himself.

Directly out to the rail from his cabin was one of the smaller boats of the *Singmaster*. He crossed to it and lifted himself by the gunwales to look at it. The oars were there neatly lashed, the trap-noose ready to set the craft free for lowering. Tom rubbed his eyes. There was a queer looking blanket-roll in the bottom. . . . He laughed. Dead Chinaman, sewn in hemp, swathed like a mummy and lying in state to be taken back for burial in the sacred hills of the home-empire. . . . John Chinaman is queer about that, Tom reflected. He doesn't mind dying, but he is

mighty particular where he is buried. The body must lie with his fathers. A white man is buried at sea, but a Chino is wrapped up for home-delivery, even the long way around the world. The distraction eased him a minute. It was almost as if he had been telling *her* this little peculiarity of travel in Asiatic waters.

Supposed he piled into the boat, pulled the trap-noose (which no landsman is supposed to know), and found himself adrift with a dead Chinaman? Now he thought of taking her with him, making her see that he hated what he had done. He laughed at the thought of kidnapping a woman to show her that his perceptions were not so bleak, but the picture reeled off to the end. Suppose light had broken with them far at sea and they found John sleeping his last sleep at their feet, marked for return to his native heath in Shantung or Pensee-su?

Back in the cabin once more. His own face that again looked out from the mirror was blotched and pinched as if by bungling hands. It expressed nothing to him but meagreness of mind—no invention or novelty about it, something petty even in its savagery, like a cheap film. He thought of going alone in the boat—a feeble whim to retaliate somehow on himself. . . . Why the boat? Why not shed these clumsy garments and drop overboard? Then he recalled Manila Bay. The pitiful boyishness of all this sort of thing crept over him; and at the same time, a challenge came from the real man, showing him that the one braver thing

was to keep still and sit tight, not seeking her, explaining nothing; to go about his business alone until he was big enough to make a woman glad of her faith in him, and keep her glad.

He did not leave his cabin the next day. The hardest moment of all was when the tea-gong sounded in the afternoon and she passed his door on her way to the sheltered place where their table twice had been brought. He could hardly believe that she had given him another chance. Yet it was like her. There had been a furious draw to the deck as she passed. It was as if he were a child, and had been dying of loneliness for his mother and she had suddenly called him. The sweat stood out on his grey face, as he turned back from the window that looked out on the deck.

Early the next morning the *Singmaster* called at Mortuagas of the Paloman group. Here Tom purchased a box of white clothes and some smaller affairs, including a priceless straw hat, for a few pieces of silver. He had spoken to no one meanwhile.



## VIII

### THE SECOND CAPTURE

**E**ARLY on the voyage Captain Corn had delivered Rothatcher's promised letter, written on the last day in Manila. Tom was advised to take up his quarters at the Fire Opal, the one adequate inn of the port of Tanalao, and to enjoy the scenery for a few days, making himself familiar with the outside of the Island until he, Rothatcher, arrived. It was also suggested that Tom keep himself free from any work or relationship with the foreigners or their interests in the Island. Rothatcher explained that the situation was complicated, but that he had right of way, and if Tom would be patient they would pull off something big together.

Tom stuck to his cabin through the last long afternoon. At tiffin Captain Corn had told him that the *Singmaster* would reach Tanalao channel at six; that the passage to anchorage in the Island harbour required two hours; that passengers might go ashore or stay aboard for the night as they chose. At tea-time in the afternoon, the woman passed the wooden shades of Tom's window. It was only the upper part

of his own body that moved; his feet stuck solidly, though all he wanted in the world was without.

Puddifoot, one of the three white men, now appeared outside. This was a Hollander, without commanding height, having the appearance of being blown tight, a shine on his face, as if from pressure within. He met the woman in front of Tom's window, uncovered the least conspicuous part of his head, and entered at once into talk. The woman answered and would have passed on, but Puddifoot ostentatiously waved his wide hat toward the sea in great geniality, and insisted on knowing why the one fair passenger had not reported to the dining-room since the first night. She would have passed him on the inner side, but there was insufficient room.

Without any outward mark of irritation, she turned and walked back, the way she had come. Puddifoot's lower-lip dropped curiously, the shine somewhat accentuated there, the look in his face of one altogether pleased with his urbanity, wide hat now on the back of his head, roving eye following the retreating figure down the passage—all of which, even to the unusual revealing touches, Tom Steepe saw through his lattice. It was Puddifoot's intent appraising look at the last, that almost shook Tom to action—the look of a man who has just been watching something his own, by the inalienable right of discovery. Tom managed to stick to his cabin. An hour after the *Singmaster* whistled at the channel entrance.

The steamer lay in the starlight in the inner harbour of Tanalao's single open port, between eight and nine that night, when Tom Steepe struck another rough place in his emotional life. A launch had just come out from the port, bringing among others, a slender man, slightly stooped, in white clothing. The woman had hurried into the arms of this stranger, as he reached deck. After that she stepped overside and went ashore with him in the launch and Tom found himself below, having halted at the half-door in the hot breath that came up from the engines. He heard himself coughing queerly. All that night he wrestled in the dark. In the depths of his jealous hell, he knew he would never feel just right in Tanalao harbour—not even ten years from now, after the pain of this one night.

The next morning early, ashore at the Fire Opal, Tom merely glanced around the corridor and backed out, caring nothing for Rothatcher's orders. If *she* had been in sight, his whole life would have been changed. He walked out in the hot light again and down to the water-front. When he reached the beach and found it low tide, he turned to the north, which seemed the more lonely stretch of shore distance. Then he kept on going. At length he was conscious of being followed. Far back was a broad thick figure walking wide and uncertainly on the sands. The knees didn't work just right; the heavy feet braced themselves curiously in making headway. The Bos'n. Even from a

distance the astonishing fact dawned upon Tom that his friend was garbed for rough weather. Evidently going ashore meant but one end of the wardrobe to Bos', whether the ship dropped hooks in Archangel or sultry Singapore.

Tom was impatient. He wanted to be alone. There wasn't a great deal doing on the surface of his mind, so far as he was concerned, but never had there been more intense activity within. He walked on for a distance, then turned. There was something plaintive in the hitch forward of the other's sea-legs. Tom now halted abruptly in the stillness of high noon. Bos' lurched into a run and came up full steam. At least one blue shirt he wore under his Norfolk, buttoned tightly to the chin, seaman's cap pulled down rigidly over his head, shiny black leather boots with soles of double thickness, trousers round-legged full length, everything but mittens to meet the temper of the North Atlantic. The huge wet face cocked to one side and words began:

"Captain Corn he arsk's me, sir, and says 'e, you'd best go and bring the Manila passenger in, the floatin' one, says 'e, or 'e'll start swimmin' again back to Corregidor."

"Tell Captain Corn I'll be back presently," Tom said. "Thank him for his interest, but this seems the right day for me to take a little walk alone."

Bos' stepped nearer, his huge paw lifted.

"I ain't a-goin' back alone," he said. "You ain't

safe out here. Dirty weather ahead, or I'm a deader. Which I says to the Captain this morning, but 'im, he just larfs like a sack o' nuts, and claps me a'tween the shoulders. All the same now, says I, you and we'd better be off out yonder."

He pointed vaguely to the foamy channel's mouth.

"I'm taking a little trip," Tom said resignedly.

"'Ere's I, 'avin' a bit o' the same."

Bos'n bowed portentiously, but would not take his place abreast; fell in, in fact, four or five paces behind. Tom heard the curious beat of his boots on the sand for a long time, and the heavy breath of the thickly-garbed one, in the hot and furious light. Presently he forgot it all in his own thoughts. The very monotony of irregularity seemed to fall into accord with Tom's frame of mind. An unknown time elapsed, and a river-mouth appeared ahead, breaking the shore-line. Tom's arm was seized by the Bos'n, his whole body jerked around. Bos'n's hand was crooked and pointed off across the salt water. A swift black canoe, eight-paddled, was crossing from some nameless point of land ahead.

"Gawd bli' me," the Bos'n muttered. "They're a-aimin' to cut us off, the beggars!"

The big square-chinned face turned to Tom as if appealing for the other to tell him it wasn't so. Tom warmed a little and smiled back, but did not speak.

"I told you as 'ow you wan't safe out 'ere, and arsks you not to come," the Bos'n accused.

"I don't mind taking a look at these natives, but it's too bad to get you tied up, too."

"'Eave Paul," the Bos'n snorted. "It ain't me as I'm a-worryin' about. It's that there fateful forebodin' about you, since we dug you out o' the 'arbour-ditch."

Here was phenomenon of attachment. Tom laughed, embarrassment between them. He found himself looking down at the other's boots and thinking how they would squeak on a city pavement. Meanwhile, the black canoe was following them just outside the surf lines. The natives beached behind them on the shore, and seven came forward—two remaining back with the canoe—a different-looking outfit than Tom had yet seen in the Pacific islands. Bos' touched his sleeve again and pointed in the opposite direction. A second canoe appeared from out the river.

"It's you they wants," Bos' muttered. "It's all off, sir, an' it's 'ell——"

Actually the seafaring one didn't consider himself important enough to be captured. Tom was curiously animated, both by the Bos'n and the adventure. White men were supposed to go anywhere these late days. Rothatcher had not mentioned any uncertain qualities in the natives of Ambergris Isle. Here was approaching the finest set of gold-brown human beings Tom's eyes had ever rested on. The almost naked bodies were lithe and marvellously set-up—a lift and a spring to their carriage, singly and in party.

Tom's mind, in that tense moment, flashed back to the capture long ago. A rainy jungle, a lot of Tagals closing in on an American newsboy, a gleam of a knife and the voice of a white man in the deeper jungle, that stopped the flash of the lifted machete.

"It's the leafy life for us, all right," he whispered to the Bos'n, as the natives closed in. "Don't resist and they won't get rough."

Native hands stretched out to their wrists. The instant of tension passed. Knives were in evidence, but were not used. There was a rather difficult moment for the Bos'n when it appeared they were to be taken to different canoes, Tom in the first, the eight-paddled affair.

"It's all right," he said. "There isn't room for us both in one. We're doubtless headed for the same place. You and I won't be far apart on any island. These people aren't cannibals——"

Dumb pain took the place of anger on Bos'n's face.

"I've 'eard cannibals is mangey," he murmured. "No, these 'ere carn't be man-eaters——"

Tom often thought of the dumb, troubled face, so wide and wet and serious, as he lay in the canoe-bottom all that afternoon, sometimes pressed gently by bare feet of the Islanders, as they tirelessly paddled. The turns of the river seemed endless. Toward dusk, deep in jungle-country, Tom Steepe heard a bird sing, a smooth, watery lilt that he had not heard for years. He was curiously content with the turn of affairs and

somehow the natives didn't get his nerve. All that he cared for in the outer world was one he couldn't have, yet every time she entered his thoughts, she touched the quick somewhere.



## IX

### ISLAND FILMS

**T**HERE was a strange familiarity about the inland heat and the heavy quick-falling dusk, the odours of the native camp and the first little village he saw in a dense mat of bamboo jungle. It brought him back vividly, his early days with Perry Chase, the eternal man-hunt of those days; the cruel life toward the last in the rains among the Central Canyons of Luzon: the same camp smells, same low voices from the shadows, some similar dusky feminine laugh under a leafy thatch, the cry of a child, the whisper of bare feet upon the black turf, and the appetizing smell of a big fish lifted from its mound of hot stones and caked earth. All this he knew with an intimacy that was deeper than words. It meant Asia.

The thought of the woman ached continually. His mind rebelled a little at the furious energy she aroused. One of the things Tom Steepe had learned in long brooding hours of confinement in Bilibid was that you dare not be at the mercy of the thing you want. If

you want a thing so that you cannot wait and work for it comfortably, the thing you want is stronger than you are, and you are not ready to have it. One must be stronger than money to get any good out of it; must be stronger than any desire, or the kick-back of getting it is deadly.

There was no quarter about all this in Tom's mind and training. A man must be strong enough even to run his own heart. A "roughneck" in a hundred ways, but prison had brought him the secret beyond price: that a man dare not be at the mercy of anything, not even a woman; certainly not at the mercy of himself in her presence.

He breathed deep. He heard the voices of native maidens—wood and reed and the soft thudding of the hidebound bamboo drums. He heard sounds in the branches and seemed to know how the night birds looked, even the curve of their throats as the notes came forth. He heard sounds deep in the thickets and seemed to know the lizards from which they came. Far off was running water, purling water. Then there was a fruity breath from the interior, the soft sweeping of bamboo leaves and another breath from the left, with a touch of dankness in it, like a river flowing between deep clay banks. For the first time that evening, he knew there were things a man can't enjoy alone. In everything he wanted her. Nothing brought

full satisfaction because she could not also sense this hidden passion of his return to the natives.

Tom sat in the doorway of a big thatched hut. Far below toward the river, a native maiden danced in the flighty lustre of the flames. The music fascinated; a distinct theme running through it, unlike the barbaric monotony of sound he had known in Luzon and the purely Malay Isles. It stirred him with strange old blood memories; stirred him also with some prescient inner warning.

"It's balmy," he found himself reasoning, "bland and balmy. It sounds easy."

But he shuddered just the same, as one used to fighting every phase and symptom of that undermining spell of the sensuous, unmoral Island East. He had not ripened under tropic suns without hard wisdom. He knew what it meant for a white man to lose his integration and take on the look of a fish in the face and not know it himself. One has to have hard fibre where it is always summer.

A shadow moved at Tom's side. Bos'n approached on his knees. He didn't consider his life worth a hope, but moved softly, nevertheless, as one who would not hasten to jar a vessel containing sure death. He had been, for the last hour or more, under one of the broader thatches a little distance off. Apparently Bos'n had heard some English talk in the household of old Chief Scarbaran.

"Gawd bli' me, but it's lonesome—they heathen

goin's on," he reported in a whisper, peering close into Steepe's face.

"It's all reasonable," Tom answered.

"Reasonable," softly snorted Bos'n. He had a Shropshire conviction that a dark skin knows nothing but the blind appetites. "Fightin' among 'emselves—fightin', father an' son—fightin' young dog, old dog. Is that reasonable, I arsks you?"

Tom didn't answer. He loved to listen.

"Hit's about us," the seafaring one continued in an awed tone. "It ain't that we're goin' to live—but 'ow we're goin' to die, mind you. 'Earty an cheerful list'nin', that were. Gawd bli' me, yis. Only 'im as 'as cocoanut milk in 'is veins——"

Bos'n now referred to the younger son of Scarbaran's house.

"'E don't want blood, 'e don't—'avin' 'ad a Christian bringin' up. I 'ears 'im arskin' the others wot they knows o' the wyies o' the prophet . . . but that other son, 'im as is the waster . . . 'e bears away due south, breathin' black out of all funnels, leavin' our younger lad wilted like a hank o' dank seaweed."

More appreciative silence on the part of Tom Steepe. Evidently there was a world-broad contrast between Scarbaran's two sons.

"It's 'ell—raw 'ell," Bos'n finished, "an' I wish I was back in the blessed bunk aboard the *Singmaster*."

The dancing girl had left the firelight and they heard

the clink of her anklets as she came nearer in the gloom.

"'Bout ship," Bos'n ordered hoarsely. "Back up into the 'ut. 'Ere she comes—'er with the rubber legs."

Tom grinned deep, but didn't move. Bos'n burrowed under a tarpaulin and feigned sleep. The girl came up almost without sound, touched the edge of the covering delicately, then laid a large bark bowl full of steaming rice and shrimps beside Bos'n's head and glided away in the dark.

Presently Bos'n stirred.

"A man ain't safe nowhere," he muttered. "If it ain't rum, it's 'oman. Rum an' 'oman. They're a hevil omen an' a curse. I've seed it work out in them little frozen fish villages where the sky looks like grey sleet. I've seed it down here in these Gawd-awful parrot islands. I tells you as 'ow a man ain't safe, not even in Lunnon. Tyke the word of old men 'oo 'ave followed the sea. . . . I 'ad a thick girl in Lunnon once. Gawd bli' me, yis. Plump as a pa'tridge, an' purple heyes. She could purr, man. I thinks as 'ow I'd chawnced on a-bleedin' ray o' sunlight at the last. Wot does I do? I squanders me substance on 'er, a-top-pin' off by investin' twenty pun' to make a 'manooensis o' 'er. An' wot 'appens, I arsks you, Sir? Back I comes from a v'yage to Tasmania an that 'ussy 'as the air of a princess an' leaves me in 'er wyke."

Steepe was shaking.

"I don't think it's man's general experience, Bos'. Most of us are safe. It's you," he said, looking into the big face. "There's something about you they can't get past——"

"Stow that!" said the Bos'n, ruckling in his throat.

"I watched her coming just now through the dusk, Bos'," Tom ruminated softly. "I sat, eyes staring wide, watching her, but she never even saw me. If she did, it never wobbled her main idea. Bos', you should have seen that face bending over you——"

"'Eave Paul," said the Bos'n squirming.

"It was a face to remember," Tom finished. "And that dish! Smell it now! All the oils and flavours of the smoky isles in there. A little burnt offering all for you——"

"It's a *double* 'elpin'," Bos' said sullenly.

Another figure now approached, taking clearer form in the fire-glow.

"It's the bad 'un," whispered Bos'.

The figure halted in the dusk and lit a machine-made cigarette—slender figure, narrow ravaged face.

He ignored Bos' entirely and looked at Tom Steepe saying:

"Come on with me, Billy. A little stone jug over there—a little stone jug, I say. Are you coming?"

Tom had arisen; the Bos'n was beckoned back. First of all, the English had astonished Tom; then the swift jerky character of it; the utter sophistication of a small low ring of life, the part of a metropolitan

underworld a street boy might pick up. It brought back to Tom a life forgotten for years. Memory returned now with this stranger, clear and deep-lined, the life a Chicago newsboy knows, the world he had sprung from, before he had been set down in the jungle of a Pacific island to find himself at war with his own people. Even the sniff of the cigarette had an American flavour—something that made Tom think of nights in the downtown alleys, huddling for heat under gratings, camping out on the piles of newspapers, breathing the warm inky heat from the press-rooms and spending pennies for cigarettes like these, even when buns and sinkers were scarce.

"Yes, I'll take one," Tom said. "Where did you get it?"

"Straight from New York, Billy, two thousand in a carton. They're not as good as they used to be."

Tom breathed forth a mouthful that left its dregs upon his palate. "No," he added, following the other through the gloom. "They haven't kept up their quality."

"How long—you—from New York?"

"I've never been in New York," Tom said. "I've been out of Chicago fifteen years. Straight west from Chicago here."

The other sniffed. "Fifteen months since I left New York. It won't be fifteen months before I'm back in New York to stay, fellah." He laughed. "I guess you think I'm not on to you. I guess you think I'm like



the rest of these sun-kissed simps. Why, I'd live in Manila before I'd live here. Do you know the Block House and Marmadukes' and Moriarity's?"

"Yes, they were part of my education," Tom remarked.

The shadowy one mentioned other places of hard-earned celebrity in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kobi, even inquiring after certain boys and girls who were accustomed to play in these blossomy bowers. The American confessed that he didn't know any of the names, and added that life moved handsome and changes were rapid on the water-fronts.

"Easy, Billy, it's little old bright red New York for mine," resumed the native son. "Oh, yes."

They had entered one of the broader thatches, a low room of woven bamboo walls—soft black-wrought vessels with wicks swimming in fragrant oil, velvet skins upon the matting and a spray of gold and black orchids in a low dish upon the floor. Arched above them was a kind of shiny god reposing upon a hand-polished bracket of gleaming black wood. A white woman had left the room just as they entered. The world had ceased to startle Tom Steepe.

"You saw her?" Scarbaran's son whispered, lifting a hand peculiarly in front of his mouth. "I bought her whole show one night in New York; bought her, manager and all, but she's the only one I kept. Maybe you've heard of her. Rosie Bartel, the dancer? . . . Say, I forgot about that fifteen years. Don't ever



whisper fifteen years to Rosie. She'd bite you deep. . . . Say, fellah, what did you come to Tanalao for?"

Tom made a few desultory remarks about life being irksome in Manila, but stopped abruptly realising that the other was not listening; occupied altogether with the opening of a jug, a small white jug upon which was a modest advertisement in French, the name of a *liqueur* perfectly unimpeachable.

"None of your family remedies to this—none of our little island what-nots, fellah. This here comes from a rusty monastery forty miles out of Paris, where you get lost in the vineyards."

The face of the green light stranger was before Tom's mind even now. A clean breath from her made him pity the poor lad before him and the woman who had just passed into the next room—lips of geranium red, canary-coloured hair, a smoky torment in her eyes. For the first time in his life Tom Steepe saw how young—how utterly young was the thing called the underworld—so young and naïve as to make you weep for those who burn out their bodies and brains, destroying the very senses which torture them continually for satisfaction.

The elder son's face actually burned with the swift breakdown of nerve and brain—a light back in the eyes like a candle burning in an ancient human skull.

"Oh, I say, fellah——"

"Yes? What's your name?" Tom interrupted.

"The other name for Tanalao—same name my

father wears. My first name—well, they call me 'Firk' back in New York. . . . Say, what are you here for? Can't tell me you were just taking a stroll this morning—can't put over none of that white man's dope. I got you, I know you. Joe Corn thought he was wise, too, but I've been around. One of the best things we do in New York is to spot your kind. . . . So you thought we didn't see you coming? Say, it's lucky I turn up here sometimes. Tanalao needs me. . . . Say, Billy, ever take a drift?"

"What?"

"The snow?"

Tom shook his head. "It's a new one," he said.

Firk laughed. "Fifteen years away from New York! And you think you're going to get by here? . . . I love New York," he added with sudden lowering of his voice and a look of sick yearning toward the door which the woman entered. "I love New York, white man—hope to die. . . . I'd die to get there to-night, but I'm not leaving here till you vultures get cleaned off the Island. New York's pretty sweet, but her slots are slippery all along the way. Every few minutes you have to drop in a sweetener."

He was lying back among the skins now with a queer surface brilliance to his eyes that startled Steepe. A quick filter of white powder in one of the lean yellow hands, a few quick sniffs and a laugh—the latter, the most pitiful of anything Steepe had yet seen on the Island.

"Let me set you straight on this, Billy," he ran on now. "It won't even do you any good to draw cards. If you fellahs clean out the old man, I ask you how I'm going to get a boatload of sweeteners to take Rosie back to New York? Not me, believe me, not me, without that boatload! Mister, I love New York; I love every brick in her body, but nothing but a boatload of Uncle Sam's currency next time—when I crawl up on the Battery stones and shake myself——"

A door shot open. The blonde head was there. "Shut up, you dam' fool. Telling everything you know. Your father mightn't want to cut this guy's throat—and then he'd know too much."

"Just as you say, Rosie," Firk murmured, his eyes trailing back in ecstasy. "Don't go 'way—oh, Rosie, don't go 'way!"

## X

### TOM HEARS HER NAME

**D**AWN was coming in the doorless hut. Bos'n, back in the shadows, was snoring still, deep, hearty and sincere like the roll of the Trades. Tom didn't dislike it. Something of it gave him a smiling sense of the physical accord of all things. All night long a sentry had stood outside with a strip of Japanese matting about his shoulders and an ancient rifle across his arm. The opening showed the white dawn, ashen-like moonlight, and the first breath of wood-smoke came in with the dewy weight of fragrance from the jungle. An indescribable gladness marked the moment.

Tom was suddenly seized with a full-powered hunger. He thought of the dish that the native girl had brought the night before. It had been taken away untouched, so far as he was concerned, likely never to come again in the same style. He wanted just that sort of casserole now—pink shrimps swimming on their backs, floating islands of nuts and clams and a vegetable mainland. Tom indulged this faminish imagination. Then he heard the sound of stone grinders pulverising grain. It brought him back a something from the

ages—familiarity so keen from the race consciousness that it seemed his own of yesterday—grinding of grains between the stones. It was a moment such as he had known as a little boy in Chicago, waiting for a prescription in the back room of a drug store, watching a mortar and pestle in use for the first time. It had seemed then almost worth stealing to get those things in his hands—mortar and pestle. And the natives were grinding now with the same utensils, only big as themselves.

Out on the turf in the grey light, Scarbaran's younger son now appeared. Up to this moment, Tom had seen him only in far shadows the night before. His arms were bare, the brown skin lightened with gold. A cool hand was outstretched. He dropped down to sit in the doorway and glanced with a smile at the figure of Bos'n, who still slept audibly, his face to the inner wall.

"You needn't worry," he said to Tom. "I'm glad you came. My father will be, too, when he understands."

"You'll have to tell me why you are glad," Tom remarked.

"You are different from the other white men—not out for treasure, so much. You are glad to be here in the jungle."

"Where do you get all this?"

The youth smiled. There was actual humour in his eyes, yet they seemed very guileless.

"I have been to Manila."

"Is that where you learned English?"

"Yes."

"To school there?"

"Yes. The natives of Manila know you very well—the Tagal people. They think you're all right. I heard about you once living with them. They trusted you then——"

Tom whistled. "These things get around the Islands, don't they?"

"I saw you in Manila, too," Scarbaran's younger son went on. "It was my friend who pointed you out, the *alcalde* of Binan. He said you would come back to *them*. Instead, you have come back to us."

This was a humorous point to the native.

"Why did you people take us prisoners yesterday?"

"You reached the river. White men haven't been coming that far lately. Didn't you really want to come to us?"

"The fact is, I don't know what I wanted," Tom said. "To get away from myself, doubtless. But are your people at war with the white men on the Island? I'm just off the steamer. Didn't get any news before starting for a walk yesterday."

"No, not at war, though not on good terms. Less and less on good terms. Not at war—yet."

He spoke the last words softly.

"What does your father mean to do with us?"

"My father wanted to keep you a close prisoner, but I told him all about you. He'll take my word that you're all right. I'm to keep watch over you. We'll be a whole lot together."

"Chief Scarbaran must trust you very much."

"Yes. Also he knows we'll need help, soon."

"You mean in the war—the war you are going to have?"

"Yes."

"Has Rothatcher made trouble for you?"

"The bearded one with the ugly name? Yes, much trouble, and his partner who lives over in the hacienda—my people call him the Cruel One; and the little Captain of the *Singmaster* who is hollow inside, and the Monk who is against all but himself—they have all made trouble! I told my father you might be the one come to help us."

"And you take all this for granted, because a few Tagal natives think well of me?"

"They knew you very well—the Tagal people. Also the Chinese, who was my teacher in Manila."

An arrow of sunlight had reached the doorway. The young man stretched out his hand as if to feel the light. The gold touched him and touched the world. The village was awake and the jungle, too.

"What's your name?" Tom asked after a moment.

"Loril."

The snores of the Bos'n gradually ceased. Now

from the shadows came the rustle and the sag of the skin pallet. The seafaring one sighed like a west wind.

"Little round o' preachin', and 'ere I've been missin' of it all."

Bos' crawled across the shadows toward the door, his tired troubled eye cooling itself at first on the native boy.

"'Ave they come for to tyke us?" he questioned, turning to Tom.

"Take us where, Bos'?"

"'Ow's I to know w'ere or wot their wyys o' slaughterin' be?"

"No hope, Bos'. We're not ticketed for slaughter. This lad's with us, and his father."

The Bos'n's heart wasn't made for receiving glad tidings in large quantities. Bos'n was looking past into one of the leafy deeps, before Tom's words were ended. The great shoulders hunched, and the look of grey foreboding took the broad face.

"'Old 'ard! 'Ere she comes!" he whispered.

It was the woman who had danced. She was nearing on the path with a great covered tray upon her head.

"And wot's that there, she's a-bearin' 'igh?" Bos'n breathed. "It's for the funeral, I'm sayin'—cloths for the funeral."

"More like tiers of breakfast to me," Tom said.



Days unfolded like a picture-book. They became more and more absorbing as Tom grasped that old Scarbaran had a remarkable spy system at work among the white men across the Island. In fact, Loril mentioned many matters of intimate Tanalao gossip concerning the three white men who had come in with Captain Corn on the last trip of the *Singmaster*; also concerning the hacienda of Victor Anstey, "the Cruel One," Rothatcher's resident partner on the Island.

Passing days did not enliven the Bos'n. He was daily expecting torture and decapitation, if not worse. In fact, the very richness and variety of the food that was brought to them hinted to his mind of ominous preparations, suggesting the plight of the little girl in the fairy tale, who was asked to put her finger under the crack of the door from time to time. Bos'n wasn't whelmed with fear for himself. He had long expected the worst. The stress lay heavily upon him for Tom's sake. He fully expected them to be led forward and disrobed in the steam of kettles. Waiting for death, Bos' wrote a log of last days with the thick stub of a carpenter's pencil which he had found in the leg of his trouser. A groaning business.

Tom's days and dreams were filled with the green light stranger, and still he didn't know her name. This lack was especially disturbing, as he came to realise that little or nothing passed among the white people of Tanalao that was missed by Scarbaran's agents. Knowing her name, he might have ascertained her pres-

ent place and purpose very easily through Loril. Finally he started an inquiry, in regard to the "young American woman who had come to Tanalao on the *Singmaster*."

"There is the young woman of the Anstey house who came on the steamer," Loril said.

"There was only one woman on the *Singmaster* this trip," Tom declared.

"Then she is at the Anstey house——"

"And the man there?" the other asked a trifle hoarsely.

"No man there, but the Cruel One."

"The man called Victor Anstey—Rothatcher's partner?"

"Yes."

"And the woman passenger—went with him to the hacienda?"

"Yes," said Loril.

Tom's mind took a wild strategic turn:

"Is he a fat man?" he asked.

"No—very thin."

"And young?"

"No," Loril answered. "The Cruel One is old, like my father—but with many labours he tries to look young."

"Do you know the woman's name, Loril?"

"It is his name—the same."

"Anstey?"

"Yes."

"His wife?"

All the summer calm of the Island seemed to rest upon Loril's face, as he answered:

"Our young men working at the hacienda have not yet told me that."

Tom's lips now locked, but that night he fell asleep early and dreamed of her. In fact, he came up out of great depths of loneliness, because she was so utterly far away. Loril was sitting motionless beside him in the darkness, a queer smile on his lips.

"Say, Loril, have I been talking in my sleep?"

"Of a green light, you spoke, of a Tai Ming mine—of the woman at the hacienda and an Island Somewhere."

"Forget it," said Tom.



**PART TWO**  
**LONE ANSTEY**



## I

### AT THE HACIENDA

**T**ANALAO the Island, was roughly round, and fifty miles across at the broadest point. A group of small volcanic peaks were massed close to the southern shore, rendering a dozen miles of the strand rocky and inaccessible from either side and altogether forbidding from the sea. Certainly the whales had a penchant for this stretch of shore; at least, many came home to die there. It was among these mountains, grouped in the southern centre of the Island, that the one mentionable river, the Mir-lapani, began and flowed generally north to the coast, cutting the Island in two and forming old Scarbaran's strategic boundary line, his ring-pass-not. The old chief's most important town and harbour was Kalilorei, on the opposite side of the Island from the city where the foreigners lived. The latter was spoken of usually as "the city," since its name was the same as the Island.

These were matters touched upon by Victor Anstey, her father's brother, during Leona Anstey's first evening ashore. She liked it all—the breath of the Island

itself, the sensuous witchery of the names—Tanalao, Kalilorei, Mirlapani. The Island people she had seen so far were more like Hawaiians than Malays, yet lighter coloured and not so fat.

This first night, after disembarking from the *Sing-master*, was passed in the city at the Fire Opal. The next morning they prepared to journey a dozen miles or more, by hill trail into the very heart of fertility where Rothatcher's and Anstey's great hacienda stood.

The Island went wild with scenery, along the way. Mountains and gorges and rivers on a small scale like Japan, yet not in the least lacking in majesty, unfolding at every turn of the trail: fruit-scented balm, sunlight, mellow but not burning, azure distances between the mountains, in which the sky and sea were one. Victor Anstey did not pretend to enter upon the offices of hospitality, until he was at home. He lived, for the most part, in solitary grandeur with books, pictures, rugs, and numerous other priceless toys.

He appeared in a purple coat for their first dinner together—a slender man, narrow face held far forward from round shoulders, delicate hands at the end of arms amazingly long and helpless. The arms seemed to dangle forth from sagging shoulders, devoid of life until they broke into the astonishingly perfect and efficient hands. The house-boys at the hacienda were almost entirely Chinese.

Dinner was after sunset and outside—a delicate maroon changing to amethyst, amethyst to purple, purple



to starry dusk, all with different scents and layers of contrasting temperatures. The hills seemed gathering in like pedestals for the night. There was music from lower in the valley. The service at the veranda table was as silent as the great change of lighting out doors. Victor Anstey spoke of Scarbaran's spy system; that the old leader of the Tanalao people had a pair of eyes, at least, in every white man's house on the Island; that even the Chinese were not safe from his influence.

He had spent certain earlier years in India and told her now of the Himalayas, although she was more interested in Tanalao—of a battle of tigers he had seen on a ledge among the foot-hills . . . about the great purple butterflies there, eight inches across from tip to tip, of so deep a purple that they shone blacker than straight black, a rose-gold edging around their wings, sky-blue body with scarlet bands. Always as he spoke, there was a faint satirical smile around his lips, as if he were listening to his own voice, as if he enjoyed watching the way his descriptions moved her.

Here was her only living relative. She had come to him from San Francisco, shortly after the death of her father. She had only seen him once before, when she was a small child, and something brilliant had remained in her memory of him, something like the plume of a bird, or a wonderfully polished bit of wood, or the flash of a red jewel. She had come alone as far as Manila, where Victor Anstey had arranged for

his partner to meet her. Rothatcher had put her aboard the *Singmaster* in charge of Captain Corn for the rest of the voyage, an unfinished commercial affair calling him back to Hong Kong.

That night in Manila harbour, the night of the sailing of the *Singmaster* for Tanalao, she had stood in the green ray of the starboard light, attracted and puzzled by the voices below. First it was the voice of a sailor; then a low drowsy whimsical tone which caught her attention. . . . They were carrying a figure up the ladder—a figure in white, but not a corpse—white and only partly clothed. She remained in a breathless sort of interest, even thinking she might be needed. A moment later, leaning forward she saw the man's face—eyes open and not altogether devoid of consciousness. The lips moved and she heard the whimsical voice again. It was a voice that would not be raised to cry out against any ruin; that face would laugh at any ruin and hold still. . . .

Affairs had not been so pleasant aboard the *Singmaster* that day, after Rothatcher had gone ashore. Captain Corn had proved too conscious of his guardianship, and the three white men on the steamer had done too much to take the place her uncle's partner had filled. Meals were ordered served in her cabin, after that one tiffin. As the hours of the voyage passed, the little matters of masculine effrontery from Captain Corn and the three white men slipped out of memory, but the eyes of the drenched and whimsical one, who

had been carried up out of the waters of Manila Bay, did not.

This young man in borrowed white clothing had done the one thing to put himself in a category with the others, and yet Leona Anstey did not put him there. Her mind might find all ancient weaknesses in his face, yet her heart knew something more. Certainly there was decency enough left in him to accept the perfect rebuke, for he did not seek her afterward.

She was not slow to learn that her uncle's prevailing passion was to stay young. He was given to baths, massages, and the like. The chief of his personal servants was a remarkable yet imperturbable Chinese, whom he abused. It was during her second day in the hacienda that Leona was forced to be present for part of an outbreak of Mr. Anstey's temper—in which he had actually used his hands upon certain dark faces of his household. She had tried to forget, but the spectacle was a persistent sickness in her.

The three white men who had arrived on the *Singmaster* were waiting down in the city for the return of Rothatcher. They became restive after several days, however, and decided that Rothatcher's partner was worth seeing. Messrs. Londal, Puddifoot, and Gholson, though coming to Tanalao from different directions, had effected a sort of partnership during the voyage. Leona Anstey heard her uncle's laugh, as he showed them into the hacienda. It sounded dangerous. "But I never talk business," he was saying.

"Politics, yes—art, yes—life at large, yes—but business, only to Mr. Rothatcher! . . . You see, I am the inaccessible side of the partnership."

She heard the sombre Gholson's croak, Puddifoot's thin pleased timbre, and fled to the farthest part of the hacienda and out into the grounds. It was too much like the dining-salon of the *Singmaster*. . . . She took an ascending trail and found a rock and a vista—smell of orange groves and the flecks of perfect red from the pomegranate gardens below, the sweet-scented grass at her feet. She would shut her eyes in the great light and breathe the soft winds flowing by. In Tanalao, in moments alone like this, she could be more nearly home than any place in the world so far.

The call of the three white men that day drained Mr. Anstey. He cared to order his own days, and any unforeseen break in his hours or habits had a disrupting effect. He appeared unable to forget Gholson.

"A cadaver, my dear Leona. A cadaver with a cloth around his throat and a voice out of the catacombs. I confess to you that I felt the cold of him, the blue mould of him——"

She did not hear the rest, but her uncle carefully finished the picture, weighing his words at intervals and choosing among the niceties of his collection. Then he turned to the Hollander, Puddifoot:

“Not so dank, my dear, but you’d know a whaler was in port. There should be a law to force such craft to do their trying-out at sea. And the big crook Londal. Yes, Londal is what he called himself—with the sash about his waist and a face running alive with sick propensities. Rothatcher would have had them all to dinner. I can hear my versatile partner drawing them out, one after another, and enjoying himself.”

The place became cold and cheerless to Leona Anstey. Something in that “enjoying himself” seemed to furnish a clue to Rothatcher, though she was far from wanting one. She was conscious of her uncle speaking again, but not the words, until her attention was actually called to the subject of Tanalao’s riches:

“ . . . Men around the world in offices, banks and clubs who answer to the one word only—‘treasure’; in every city, in all trades, those who answer with their hearts to any rumour of buried wealth or sunken gold!” he was saying. “Some one speaks the word. This time it was Scarbaran’s elder son, the worthless one they call Firk—you can picture him drunk in New York, telling a table-full of his father’s tons of treasure in ambergris. At least, Rothatcher appears to have ascertained that it was Firk who started the story in New York, and now the answer: Londal, from the northern water-fronts of Asia, Puddifoot and Gholson from New York, Haggard from South America, and this Tom Steepe from the prison-pen of Luzon——”

Her hand was raised. She almost spoke, but he did not notice and she caught herself in time.

"Firk drops a little whisper in a metropolitan cafe, and here two years afterward, the *Singmaster* brings down four answers in one passage. They'll be coming in from around the world like vultures dropping out of the sky as the carcass cools. Isn't it queer how they answer—the pirates around the world? Pirates in labourer's smock and minister's frock. Pirates around the world answering a vibration, just as if their names were called."

"And who is Haggard?" she asked huskily.

"A monk from South America," he said. "Haggard—" he was smiling at her suddenly. "Haggard—" he went on, "well, Rothatcher might take care of the others, but I think I could deal with Haggard best. Of them all, Haggard has an idea. Of them all, Scarbaran is really afraid of Haggard."

"But what are you afraid of?" she asked.

There was a smile upon his lips. His eyelids narrowed and the pupils dilated at the same time.

"Afraid of his getting the treasure—of ambergris," he said softly. "It's certain to be taken away from the natives. The point is, we really should be the ones to do it."

"We?" she questioned.

"Meaning Rothatcher and myself. But there is this difference," he added. "We came to Tanalao before

it was known as Ambergris Isle. I have been living here for twenty years; also, Rothatcher calls this place home. Old Scarbaran's rule of the Island cannot go on. We should be the ones to take over the treasure, since somebody is bound to."

"You spoke of another—Tom Steepe."

A sort of glare came into his eyes.

"Steepe also was on the steamer with you, coming down from Manila. I was supposed to bring him here to the hacienda with you, but neglected to hunt him up that night when I went out to the steamer to get you. The next morning, he disappeared—walked off in the most idiotic fashion——"

"Where did he go?"

"Merely glanced into the Fire Opal, it was said. Crossed the wine-shop and took a glance into the billiard-room where one Chinese was said to be polishing in the gloom. Then out again and back to the shore."

"What was he looking for?"

"No one knows. He strolled through the city, along the water-front, and out along the open shore toward the Mirlapani where, so far as we know, he was taken over by the natives."

"Is he dead?" she asked.

"Probably not."

"Would not one be safe walking alone along the strand, this side of the river?"

"They must have liked his looks," Mr. Anstey re-

plied. "The foreigners here are usually rather careful about moving alone, even toward the near banks of the river, though Scarbaran very rarely shows himself aggressive on this side."

"And there is no word from him?"

"According to our three friends who called to-day, the young man has not been heard from. I am wondering what Rothatcher will say."

"What does Mr. Rothatcher want with this Tom Steepe?" she asked.

"He may be looking for an antidote for the Monk, Haggard," her uncle answered.



## II

### "A MAN IN HIS EYES"

IT was ten in the morning. Rothatcher was having his grapes and a touch of the real *col chiquot* in his own tea garden at the hacienda. Weeks had passed since he had partaken of the similar sacrament under the palms of the Oriente at Manila. The *Singmaster* had made another round trip as far as Hong Kong and was anchored again in the Island's west harbour. Rothatcher had reached the hacienda the evening before, having spent the afternoon with Londal *et al* at the Fire Opal. The balance of the evening he had passed in conference with his partner, Mr. Anstey. Pale grapes from Tuscany just now—and Leona Anstey across the table. . . .

"No," Rothatcher was saying, "I don't feel altogether hopeless about the disappearance of our young friend, Tom Steepe. Still, I thought he knew too much about life down here to walk off like that, the moment the *Singmaster* anchored. Did you notice anything wrong with him?"

"Only that he kept altogether to himself," she answered. "I had tea with him once or twice during the

first half of the voyage, but after that he remained alone."

"What do you make of Tom Steepe—as a man to have tea with?"

Rothatcher was utterly agreeable. The question was spoken in a tone of one who desires the good of all concerned.

"I found him interesting. My uncle spoke of prison in connection with Tom Steepe, but he didn't know the story."

Now Rothatcher became unreservedly interesting. He told how Tom Steepe had passed his table at the Oriente, three weeks before, and turned at the mention of "Ambergris Isle"; then he repeated the story that Bellamy had told of the Chicago newsboy and the American renegade, in the Central Canyons of Luzon.

"Steepe had promised himself that the whole American army wasn't big enough to put him back in Bilibid alive," he added, "and yet it didn't occur to him even to criticise Bellamy for talking aloud. The old man had once done him a good turn, he said. It appears to be a life and death matter to Steepe when he gives his allegiance."

Leona became amazed at her own interest.

"I took him on—or was ready to—unsight and unseen, so to speak," Rothatcher finished. "But he isn't so easy to get on with. He'll turn against himself rather than to play into another's hands. You can't be abrupt with him; that's what *he* does best. Still,

he's what he is, Miss Anstey—unbranded, a maverick to the bone.”

She had to meet his eyes now, and she knew she paled and flushed before his look, which he held as he finished.

“Oh, yes, Tom Steepe has a big day coming. There's a man in his eyes.”

The worst of it all was it softened her heart to Rothatcher; made her like him whether she would or not. Also, the bearded one's characterisation made many moments on the *Singmaster* plain. Her mind dwelt upon the love of the boy for the renegade; his allegiance to the old chaplain who had talked to his hurt; the outlaw who would destroy himself rather than play into the hands of another; the whimsical voice she had heard over-side in the dark and the twisted smile; the white shock upon his face when he had failed in her eyes—and always the fact that he had stayed in hiding from her to the last. Under all this she could now see a great yearning back of the mockery of his glance; the deep secret sufferings of his solitude; a certain tired smile which had come to his face because of many hatreds unexpressed.

Later, when alone, she heard the voices of her uncle and Mr. Rothatcher, below her window among the arbours. They had much to say to each other after weeks of separation—a novel relation, certainly, these two opulent bachelors, but there was a queer cumulative feeling of uncertainty about it which she could not explain.

For a long time she dwelt in the shadows of her great room, pondering like an Oriental woman. . . . "There's a man in his eyes." . . . The sunlight outside was constant and unvarying. At last, as the shadows lengthened, there was a call to the hills. She emerged magically restored, breathing a new freshness in the air, some long forgotten flavour for her quickened senses.

The night itself was an intoxicant—native melodies, sheltered candles, a soft land wind. For the first time in her life, she realised that there are joys which the human heart cannot partake of alone.

Dinner was over, but Rothatcher beckoned her to a table outside. The big man sat among the banks of fragrant foliage in the soft effulgence from the lanterns. He would have spoken, but the voices of the natives from the cabins were particularly entrancing that moment. Noticing her delight, he shut his eyes also to listen, with the low-voiced remark that it was good to hear the field hands sing again. Native strings and wind-tubes blent with the voices. When Rothatcher spoke again it was as if Leona were recalled from a dream.

"Some find it sensuous," he said.

"It is heart-breaking, the innocence of it!" she exclaimed strangely. "It seems that these people must be let alone—that old Scarbaran knows best!"

She did not hear his answer. She had touched

some hidden, ancient, sobbing, dancing pulse of the Island. "To think that all this should be desecrated for ambergris!" she added impetuously.

"The native spirit has taken you over to-night, Miss Anstey."

"It's the music! I seem to sink and steep in it. I feel—I feel like a mother to them here!"

She had left the table where Rothatcher sat, and was at the far end of the cultivated grounds where the garden lanterns ended. There was fine freedom now in being alone. She followed the paths beyond the low-pouring candlelight. Her heart seemed to be the heart of the Island. The music was nearer and the spirit of Tanalao—fragrance, beauty, tradition. . . . There was a rustle deeper in the foliage. She turned. A white-clothed native figure appeared there and approached, hand lifted. She was frightened for an instant, but saw a boyish and rather wonderful smile in the shadows, teeth vividly white. The young native seemed embarrassed, too, and that kept her from hurrying away.

"Excuse me," he said. "It is the third night I have come—hoping to see you——"

"What is it?" she asked breathlessly.

"I am Chief Scarbaran's son, and my friend, who is in camp with us, is greatly troubled about you."

"Your friend?"

"Mr. Steepe——"

"You say you have come before?"

"Yes, this is the third time within five nights——"

"And what does your friend want to know?"

"He did not send me. He does not know I have come to you. It is because he is troubled that I took the chance to come, hoping to speak with you. I think he wants to know if you are to stay on the Island, and if you belong to this——"

His hand indicated the hacienda and gardens.

"I'm staying here as a guest," she said. "But how do you know Mr. Steepe wants to know about me?"

"I have been with him many days and nights—even while he slept."

"Why did Mr. Steepe go to your people?"

"He reached the border on the shore and was taken prisoner. But he is all right. We know him now."

"Are you going to set him free?"

"No, he is to stay with us——"

"You mean he is going to help you?"

The boy smiled at her, but did not answer.

"You think—you think I am one of those who have come to help carry away the riches of Tanalao?" she ventured with a smile. "It isn't true—it really isn't."

"Yet you live here—his guest," he said incredulously, pointing to the hacienda again.

"Yes, for a while. I did not understand."

"My friend will be very glad to hear that, also," the native said after an instant.

He turned. Leona did not call him back.

### III

#### CAPTAIN CORN'S LITTLE PART

**R**OTHATCHER kept Messrs. Londal, Puddi-foot and Gholson waiting long at the Fire Opal for a conference at the hacienda. The three had cemented a partnership, but were waiting for the bearded one to make the first move. If they had chafed in the weeks of waiting before Rothatcher arrived, they had broken down vital tissue in the last three days. Leona Anstey slowly realised that Rothatcher was using this later interval to have the white men carefully watched, and also to bring them conveniently near the breaking-point. Rothatcher's favourite table in the tea-gardens was in a sheltered thicket of orchids and magnolias, with a babble of spring water, low-voiced and calling under the green. Leona Anstey joined him there the third morning.

"The three are coming to-day," Rothatcher reported. "Three-in-one it is now, and the one is Londal. I'm wondering if I had better let Londal bring down his army?"

She waited for him to go on.

"He wanted to *embark* his gang this trip down in



the *Singmaster*. I managed to prevail against him. But now there is our friend Haggard to be considered. Haggard is coming along too fast. It may take Londal's squadron of invincibles to whip the Monk, but that would be an extremity."

"How can Londal have an army?" she asked.

"Scrapings and scourings from the Asiatic water-fronts—a hundred-odd white ruffians left over from the Philippine, Boxer, and Russ-Jap services. As many more Chino and Jap outlaws. Londal has managed to hold them together for a job or two."

Tanalao's cordon of enemies were before her: the capacious and resourceful Monk operating to the south among the Chinese and Scarbaran's outcasts, toward the end of taking over the Island for himself; her uncle and Rothatcher on the ground with vast capital and numerous Chinese, altogether mercenary, except possibly a few spies of Scarbaran; Londal with a band of white and yellow and brown incorrigibles—a lump of misery came out of it all for Leona Anstey. . . . The three arrived at the hacienda an hour later. She heard Rothatcher's jovial greeting and facile explanation of his delay. The conference was resumed at intervals during the afternoon and for dinner in the evening came Captain Corn of the *Singmaster*. Wine was exposed to light.

Leona Anstey left the hacienda at the opposite side of the veranda, while the five still sat at the dining-table. She was out among the lantern-lit paths again,



obeying a persistent lure to go once more to the end of the lights where the young native had appeared the night before. If he had come three times in five nights, might he not come again to-night? He did not, however, though she waited long.

There were voices back at the tea tables. Rothatcher's party, meanwhile, had moved out from the hacienda. She saw the huge figure of Londal through the leaves and the white conical head of Puddifoot. The other adventurer, Gholson, was there, also Captain Corn. She hesitated. Her path led back toward the voices, but she found another that led around, though not out of reach of their tones. . . . Just now she heard the word *ambergris*—then the thin but bell-like tones of Captain Corn:

“Ambergris, man? Why, they’ve got vaults of it! In nineteen hundred a German tramp-steamer took a supply out of here that the French perfumers and confectioners are still using. That was before old Scarbaran knew the value of what he had. Why, man, the whales just crawl up on that southern strand and cough themselves to death. . . . Listen here, old Scarbaran don’t care anything about Tanalao—not the Island itself—it’s only the ambergris vaults standing by. He’s learned the value of the stuff now, and wants to get out from under centuries’ accumulation. There’s enough of the grease cached over there, within sound of the sea, to make every native man, woman, and child on the Island rich in his own name. . . . How

many? Well, there's four or five thousand natives with Scarbaran, counting the women and children."

There was an instant's lull in which the woman had tiptoed deeper into the foliage. Then a voice very seldom heard—the voice of a sick man, harsh and old, a chronic hoarseness:

"It would be a lot simpler to make a divvy between two or three hundred of Londal's rum-hounds."

This was the croak of Gholson, the least obtrusive of the three white men—Gholson of the white eyes and tightly wrapped neck.

Londal, the red one, spoke authoritatively.

"Ya-as," drawled the hoarse one, "ya-as."

The next was the flute of Captain Corn again.

"It wouldn't take two or three hundred of us to give 'em the measles or small-pox. Keep their minds occupied with an epidemic. Get 'em all huddled together and looking at the world through a sickness——"

There was silence· then another voice not heard before, said:

"This epidemic idea of Captain Corn's is the best thing I've heard yet."

That was her uncle's voice. She had not seen him there. Leona was running. It wasn't that she had heard all she wanted, but that she could not endure more. The loose laugh of Puddifoot and something of warning from the sparkling little fiend from the *Singmaster* followed her as she fled.

## IV

### HAGGARD CLOSES IN

THE hacienda had become a loathsome place to Leona Anstey. She would have left the Island the next day, had the *Singmaster* been sailing. Rothatcher was away two days, supposed to be at the Fire Opal, but it transpired on his return that he had made an attempt to interview Scarbaran, and been refused by the old Islander. The bearded one was inclined to blame Victor Anstey for this, as well as for the growing menace of the Monk from South America. The rise of the latter was the big theme of all hours. It obviously made more important the part that Londal must play; and this part was the one originally designed for Tom Steepe—a fighting agent to act as an antidote against the Monk's poisonous activity among the Islanders. These things slowly filled Leona Anstey's understanding.

Again in her room, she heard voices below in the arbour. Rothatcher and her uncle had been walking together and halted there. She was not ready to leave the room and had become deadly interested in the drama of Tanalao.

" . . . You remember, Victor, the day when you told me you knew more about Scarbaran and his Islanders than I did."

There was no answer.

"Do you remember when you advised me to leave Tanalao to you?"

The words were peculiarly impressive in the vast silence of the sunlit morning.

"With Haggard gathering the forces for revolution and Scarbaran even suspicious of our part in that——" her uncle began.

"Scarbaran was not suspicious when I went away, Victor. He has refused to see me now."

"You lay the blame of that upon me?"

"Scarbaran has never refused to see me before. I find Scarbaran lost to us; Haggard actually dangerous, because you did not treat him better when he came; Steepe taken over by the natives and abandoned, for all that you have done."

"What could I do with a young fool who walked off along the shore?"

"My instructions in regard to him were brief. Captain Corn delivered them to you at once. Steepe did not leave the *Singmaster* until the next morning. He should have been your guest that night as well as Miss Anstey. I say my instructions were brief. It is certain they were plain. They were not carried out. No instructions apparently have been carried out."

They had walked on. Rothatcher went down to the

Fire Opal that afternoon. At dinner her uncle joined her, looking old and worn out.

"Rothatcher lives in chaos," he remarked. "Chaos is his environment. More and more, during his voyages I bring order and silence here. Each time when he comes, the disruption is more keen. Just now it appears to have spread over all the Island—the life of order and beauty more and more impossible——"

They heard a pony galloping up the drive. One of the servants hurried in with a message. Victor Anstey's face was dead white as he read.

"He has done it!" dropped curiously from his lips.

She waited, concerned with the nature of the tidings.

"No one else could have done it," he muttered, after a moment.

"You mean that conditions—that things have reached a breaking point on the Island?"

She saw a blue-veined nucleus in his temple rising like a welt.

"It's Haggard!" he said vaguely. "He threatens to turn his war upon us, as well as upon Scarbaran. Our position here in the hacienda becomes untenable, if that is true."

He left her at once. It was the hour for her walk to the far end of the path—little hope that the boy would come to-night, but she would not miss the chance. . . . Some one else stood there, so still that she had to peer intently to be sure. Then she saw Tom Steepe's smile, the head turned to the right and the

shoulder lifted to it with a queer jerk, as he said in the voice of one whose throat was dry:

"I didn't mean to come. In one way, I didn't want to."

Merely the upturn of one corner of his mouth made his smile look twisted. It was as if she had dwelt long on this phenomenon.

"I expected the boy——" she began.

"I had to get to you to-night or soon. I had to get this straight, if you really are interested in the natives——"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Why, this Monk, Haggard, is on your war-path. He's out for the whole Island. You see, I couldn't leave you here—if you're with us—that is——"

"I heard—just now about Haggard, but it's good of you to warn me."

Her words put light in his face, in spite of his attempt to take no hope that was not fully established. . . . He was thinner, whiter, as if he had kept much to the shadows, a force about him that she had missed before, if it had been there.

"You might get off the Island——"

"But the *Singmaster* is away——"

"But you can go down to the City."

"I'd like to do something besides run away. Every one is so against the natives. Every one wants to seize what they have!"

Loril said, "your name is Anstey."

"Yes."

"But that's the name of Rothatcher's partner."

"Yes, my uncle——"

"But those two are against—why, this hacienda is headquarters against the natives."

"Does Chief Scarbaran say that?"

"It's been said quite enough. It's working knowledge now. Why do you stay here?"

"Victor Anstey is my father's brother. I came to stay here for a time—just a guest. I knew nothing of the real conditions. They become more ominous and sinister every hour. But the Island people—I do seem to know them! It's all so strange, but there may be some real meaning in your going straight to the natives that morning, instead of coming here."

"Was I to come here?"

"Yes, Mr. Rothatcher gave orders to my uncle for you to be brought here with me."

"That was your uncle—who came to the ship?"

"Yes."

Tom Steepe laughed softly, as if he were mocking himself.

"I am getting it straight," he muttered. "Yes," there was something to my going to the natives that morning. Oh, yes. But what gets to you about the natives?"

"Their music, their tradition, something in them all that is in the boy's face——"

"Say, you've hit it! I hadn't thought of that."

"I have found I don't belong—at least, in my uncle's affairs. It seems as if some of us should stand by—when these natives are being treated so."

For a moment they talked fast together, almost as if they shared the same mind; or rather, as if they both were drawing from some dynamic thing between them on this one subject of the natives.

"You've got it," Tom laughed presently. "Nobody ever accused me of being a philanthropist, but this looks like a white man's last chance."

Now they were both laughing, their faces close together, in the flame of a single purpose.

Tom Steepe whistled softly. "It's a new one on me," he added. ". . . Yes, it's what Loril said. He said he thought you belonged, too. I had to come and see. It's a fact, we've both got the same soft spot about Scarbaran's natives. But you mustn't let Haggard, the Monk, get you."

"But how did you come here to-night, if you are Scarbaran's prisoner?" she asked.

"Loril showed the way. I'm not tied up, you understand. They're beginning to believe in me, over on the eastern side. . . . You haven't told me what you are going to do——"

"I can't say what is to be done yet. Everything is changing here. Everything terrible."

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Is life hard for you to take—here at the hacienda?"



"Not that, but so deep and baffling and invariably against the Island."

"They're good to you?"

"Oh, yes."

"I'll be close enough. I'll keep in touch with you through Loril. I don't expect to get here again, but say, I could whip Haggard alone to-night——"

He drew back whiter than ever, his eyelids falling shut for a second—not seeing that her hand just then had started toward him.

"Better let me know your first name," he said suddenly.

"Leona——"

He repeated it, and added: "I don't care much about that. It isn't you. I've got to have another to think by."

"My father used to call me 'Lone,' " she said.

"Oh, I say, that's it. I like that—Lone Anstey—that's the one! I'm hurrying back, Lone Anstey."

She saw his lean shoulder lurch a little as he passed—a flick of a movement, and the queer quick shake of his head. She ran after him, touched his sleeve.

"I only want to tell you," she said breathlessly, "that you are doing so well—that you have come so far along, since the *Singmaster*—a man in your eyes—to-night."

## V

### TANALAO CALLS LONE ANSTEY

**A**NOTHER night and sleep roamed far. She had seen more than a man in Tom Steepe's eyes—a challenge of destiny for herself alone. Tanalao breathed softly, fragrantly upon her through the open windows. Even in full daylight, one miracle remained: There was a living dearness about him for her heart, a lure to ancient joys and pangs, the call to be all that *human* means, and to seek content with him in the mother-hushes of the earth.

She was up early, moving softly about the room, performing little affairs to which her mind and heart gave no attention at all. She saw the old earth that morning as never before, in all its sweetness and fertility, but also she began to realise it was not for her—now. From childhood she had always known that finding a lover meant finding a task to do.

She stood still a moment in the wonder of the new pulses of her own being. She was alive. She smiled in a kind of fear at the meaning of being alive. It was like a shock to her what *woman* meant—the beauty that might be brought down here to earth, if she dared

to tarry—the magic of little things, of rains and winds, of cabin, garden, food and firelight and dawn, of good labour together . . . of listening for his step and eager tiny fingers searching in her breast—all the beauty and magic that the mad world has lost . . . but not for her, not for her—now!

All that day she watched the breaking down of the ordered affairs at the hacienda with the eyes of a stranger. There was much agony now for Victor Anstey in the extent of his treasures. A myriad things of beauty constituted his environment, and she saw the pitiful tragedy of one whose soul is a prisoner, meshed in materials. She helped much and long—arranging, sealing, packing valuable collections—and a hundred times the sentence came back like an old song, “The heart is where the treasure is.”

More rumours came in that day of Haggard’s nearness. Late in the afternoon, word was received direct from Rothatcher at the Fire Opal, to the effect that her uncle, if possible, and in any case, Miss Anstey, should come down to the port that night.

“You had better go at once,” Mr. Anstey said. “I shall have your things sent later. There are two hours of daylight. You can be there in time for dinner——”

She saw at a glance that he was involved in a tension of hatred for his partner. She had no intention of leaving the hacienda before the hour, at least, when Loril would appear, if he were to come that night. A

servant occupied Mr. Anstey at this moment, and Leona left the room. A few minutes later she saw two ponies brought from the stable to the *porte-cochère*, doubtless for her and the groom to make the journey to Tanalao. It had been a mistake for her to evade the issue, for her uncle was coming to find her now. She answered his knock at the door. He looked at her startled for an instant, because she was not in riding clothes.

"I shall not go until later—if I do go down to the City, to-night," she said.

Victor Anstey straightened his slim bent shoulders, and peered at her, his head turned sidewise.

"Are you quite sane?" he asked.

"One thinks one is sane, even at the worst."

"Get into your riding habit quickly, Leona. The ponies are waiting——"

She smiled at him.

"You mean you refuse to obey me?"

"If it has come to that—yes."

"You remind me of my brother," he said, stepping forward slowly.

In the scene that ensued, Leona Anstey took merely a laughing part, though moments were terrible. Back of everything in her mind recurred the sentence she had heard from his lips on bringing measles or small-pox to the natives. She saw that his selfishness had become a madness, and that she, Leona Anstey, was alone—in his house, in the Island, in the world. She paced her room as the night fell. Curiously, under-

neath all was a sort of singing freedom, as if she would soon be free—walking alone, free, out under the stars.

She went to the end of the path. Loril was there. He said that he might not be able to come to her again, because the lines of Haggard the Monk were tightening about the hacienda; also that he could not come to her, if she went down to the Fire Opal.

“My father has asked for you to come to our camp,” he said.

“Your father——”

“Chief Scarbaran. . . . Yes, he has asked me to come to bring you as his guest. My mother will welcome you and my two sisters.”

“How did your father know?”

“I told him about you—how you were interested in our people. Also I told him it would make our friend Mr. Steepe very happy. This would be a good thing since he is doing so much for us.”

A chill touched her now.

“What did Mr. Steepe say about this invitation?”

“He does not know——”

“But did you not come from him to-night?”

“He asked me to tell you to go down to the Fire Opal, or leave the Island——”

“What else?”

“Only to tell you—to have me say—that you and he wanted the same thing.”

She stood a moment in the lantern light, searching the native’s eyes and face.

"Will you come?" he said at last.

"When?"

"Now, with me—to-night!"

"Wait!" she whispered, turning in haste back toward the hacienda.

**PART THREE**  
**THE LEAFY LIFE**





## I

### GLEAMING OLD GUNS

EACH morning the Bos'n arose early. Breakfast over, he divested himself of his shoes and bared his chest; then, with back to the wall and breathing hard, he had a set-to with the blunt-edged pencil. He filled the rear-end of a notebook which he had produced from the Norfolk jacket. Days of worried look, titanic effort, and anxious work. Now and then he roared out to Tom for advice on points of spelling. It was never more than advice; there being always the two sides to be weighed. Bos'n was touchy over style. There was a yarn in his seaman's chest by the name of *Barriers Burned Away*. The same yarn, said Bos'n, had saved the light of his blessed reason once, when he was adrift in the doldrums. By the weave and texture of *Barriers Burned Away* he swore, its revelations of life and romance filling all his heart. Bos'n's log was designed to be written in something of the *Barrier's* style.

"'Ow's this 'ere by wye of a title?"

"I'm listening," said Tom.

"The Larst Dyes of a Christian Sailor in the Nineteenth Cenchr'y."

"Grand, I should say. But what's the use of putting it way back there in the dusky ages?"

"'Ow's that there?"

"Nineteenth Century."

"Veer awye!" Bos'n called, dismissing the matter.

But Tom was disposed to discuss. It was several moments before the Bos'n looked up, ponderous matters of art having been concluded meanwhile.

"'Ere's we," he said with finality, "and 'ere's the bleedin' cench'ry. Now where's the little 'ump-backed argument?"

Scarbaran still remained in the jungle place, fifteen miles inland from Kalilorei. His agents working in the Anstey hacienda had almost a household familiarity with all that was going on within those walls and grounds. Tom learned certain of Victor Anstey's mannerisms; of the coming of Londal and the others to the hacienda; of the return of Rothatcher. It was like looking into a crystal. Meanwhile, Haggard was harder to watch. The Monk was said to have a sort of magical influence over the outcasts from Scarbaran's tribe and the Chinese and other outlanders of the southern and western sections of the Island.

"But what does this Haggard want, Loril?" Tom had asked. "Has he heard the word *ambergris*, too?"

Loril shook his head, as one who knew more than he could speak.

Tom's mind reverted to the table at the Oriente in

Manila; and to another time on a steamer in the China Sea when a blob of fresh ambergris was winded, so far away as scarcely to be picked out by powerful binoculars—a tiny yellow patch on the water, yet how that smell came roaring in!

“It’s a strong word,” Tom added drily. “Haggard may be fighting on the sheer strength of that.”

The Monk was said to be arming his fast-growing outfit with comparatively new Krag rifles of a design used by the American soldiers. Tom looked over Scarbaran’s arsenal with a rather sorry smile. The rifles here were ancient, half a century of gleaming wear upon stock and barrel. Ammunition for these old pieces could only be procured in countries struck-still with decadence. It was Lisbon, chiefly, that the supply came from. Loril said there was a church in Lisbon with a tunnel underneath where many boxes of ammunition were still stored, and that a Portuguese ship had called five or six times in the past twenty years with a boat-load of boxed cartridges. His father had contracted for the whole supply.

Tom took one of the old rifles in his hand. This particular specimen was a whole lot better than appeared before examination. It was heavy and the stock showed some rough handling, but breech and bore were clean, the lock still young. This was consistent with Tom’s general findings among Loril’s people. What properties they had, belonged to all and were reverently cared for.

"How many rifles are there?"

"There are fourteen hundred, not counting the broken ones."

"Fourteen hundred in as good shape as this?"

Loril nodded.

"And big stores of ammunition?"

"Yes, there are parts of several shiploads."

"And these cartridges actually work? That is, the caps have not gone dead with age?"

"Out of certain boxes, one in twenty fails," Loril said. "Out of other boxes, not one fails."

Tom considered. "We'll have them greased and overhauled. Fourteen hundred pieces as good as this, a cavern full of ammunition, ninety-five per cent good. Oh, this isn't so bad!"

His meeting with Leona Anstey at the end of the path had helped to awaken Tom Steepe to the task at hand for Scarbaran's people. Vagueness and mockery vanished from the white man's eyes for the following day at least. More life and efficiency were put into Scarbaran's little army in two drills, morning and afternoon, than in all the days preceding.

"I never knew it before," he remarked to himself at dusk, "but a man can bring out of a job like this just what he sees in it—can bring out as much as he puts in."

A magic day all through, a closing tight upon all purposes, a clearing of all distances, hope in his eyes, a hum in his heart. He tried to remember what she said, but it was all above words. It seemed a sort

of great play, a bit too fine to be brought into actual reduplication of words. Something had come through to him from an inner lost self, as if his voltage had been increased in body and mind. She had always brought a quickening.

Last night he had only wanted to know one thing: to prove from her own lips the whisper that had come from Loril—that she was not in sympathy with her uncle against Scarbaran's people. To-night he wanted to know a hundred things; also heaviness was upon him because of the actual dangers around her.

Lying on his cot in the dark he had only to drop his eyelids, for the little native lines to run before him again. There was a smile on his lips, but a smart in his eyes. It was heart-breaking how Scarbaran's boys tried, how carefully they held the old gleaming guns. There was a round full click to those ancient locks and cocks that seemed trying to tell the whole story of Scarbaran to Tom Steepe. A civilised army would throw these guns away; but Tom knew it isn't what you carry in your hand, but in your heart, which slays the giant. Pick up a pebble on the way, if your heart is right. . . .

His smile hardened a little after a moment. He was thinking now how Fate had used him back in Luzon fifteen years before, turning him against his own people. It had not come about through choice of his. He had merely followed a man. It was so now. Taking up the cause of Scarbaran, he seemed against the

rest of the world; and Scarbaran was bound to lose. If it were not Rothatcher, it would be some one else. If Haggard were whipped, another would come. The call of the hid-treasure had gone out—the one invincible call of this man's world. If it were not ambergris they were after, it would be something else. Scarbaran was holding hard to the last arcadia on the planet, but doom had sounded for all arcadias.

Long afterward he was in a kind of dream, but tones of voices thrust in. . . .

“He is in there——” This was from Loril.

“Oh.”

“You will be near——”

“But do not wake him now!”

“No? . . . It will soon be dawn.”

“I can't see him now! I'm so very tired!”

“You may rest now. I shall bring my sisters to serve you.”

## II

### LONE ANSTEY BEGINS HER TASK

**F**ROM the first word Tom hadn't breathed. Now he had arisen—to stand back in the shadow of the doorway. Loril and the woman were out of the ashen light of a high waning moon. He saw them together there, on the way to one of the main thatches. . . . He heard Bos'n snoring and actually wondered if Lone Anstey would think he made that noise. This absurd trick of surface consciousness never disturbed the great thundering reality that she had come. He was in the doorway. Then he knew from her words that she did not want to see him yet, and stepped back. Later he dropped down on the pallet again. The coming of that dawn was deliberate; momentous. Tom was strained with waiting. Abroad he found nothing different from any other morning. Breakfast was brought for him and the Bos'n as usual. Loril appeared.

“When am I to see her?”

“Then you know——”

Tom's tones were repressed. “Of course, I know. I heard her voice before light! I saw you two come

in. Tell me right now what it's about—what happened to bring her here?"

"My father said it would be good to have her here. Also the Monk's army is nearing the hacienda. She had to leave there."

Tom bowed his head. He noted presently that Loril was watching him with a deep sorrow in his eyes.

"Are you not glad that she has come?" he asked.

Tom's arm swung around the boy's shoulder and his hand closed upon the other's cool hand. "Glad," he said, "it's everything I want, but don't you see, it frightens a man? It's so much!"

"What are you afraid of?"

Tom's throat tightened.

"I'm afraid for her life—afraid of war—afraid of jungles, afraid of you—yes, afraid of myself!"

It was almost mid-forenoon before her hand was raised to him from the doorway of the main thatch. He hurried to her. She came forward slowly. Yet as to time itself, there was neither fast nor slow. Time had stopped for them. The world was utterly still. Thin liquid gold was upon everything, sunlight beaten thin, even to diffusion, but upon everything—upon her black hair, upon the back of her hands. . . .

"Why, you look so small!" he said softly.

She lifted the white robe and showed one bare foot in a thin sandal.

"You're like one of us—the way you swung——"



"I feel like an Island woman," she laughed.

Their eyes held each other, a laugh in hers, but a conflict in the man's. He was tortured with sheer strength of feeling.

"And you've come here to stay?"

"Yes."

"He let you—your uncle?"

"I left him in his anger. I had to decide quickly. I may have done wrongly."

They were walking away from camp, the rest of the world slipping out of their eyes. She told him of the scene in the late afternoon, and of certain last moments at the hacienda.

"I ran from the boy, Loril, and found my uncle at the hacienda. He looked at me under the brilliant lights of his house. He thought I was insane. I saw his eyes under the lamps—the room was so bright that it hurt my eyes. It had been a terrible day for him. The house was full of treasures and he stood in the midst of them—lost in them—all the lights blazing upon him so pitilessly. . . . His eyes were like—like the pictures of old sailing ships struggling in the storm! He cast me out in his anger, but I need not have gone. My father was like that in his rage. The sense was upon me—the sense that I belonged under stars—that soon I would be out under the stars walking, walking——"

"Good! . . . Good!" Tom Steepe kept saying.

They walked softly, branches folding forward and flying back shut as they passed. They knew a need

like that for deep drinking, when one is allowed just sips, yet there was sparkling joy in it all. Tom was telling her about the natives; how they had taken to him at once—as if his coming had been foretold.

"They looked for a woman to come, too," he added. "It seems we were both expected—to come and help them."

"It is like a homecoming!" she whispered. "They're all so sweet and gentle to me here in Scarbaran's house—Loril's sisters and the old mother. I was actually alone in the world. And this is such rest—I wonder if it can last."

They were deep in the green silence; they halted in the warm gloom. She looked up at him, standing close, the austere thing about her, utterly gone.

"You seem so little!" he said huskily.

His hand lifted to his throat and apparently closed there.

"Oh, no you don't!" he said quietly, looking straight at her.

She didn't wince. The smile held straight into his eyes.

"I wasn't talking to you!" he muttered. "I was talking to myself. Nothing like that again—like that on the *Singmaster*——"

"I understand," she whispered. "I saw how much you had changed since then, when you came to the end of the path—night before last. I think I could not have come here, if I had not seen that."

She was still standing close, her hands lifted to his shoulders—laughing, unafraid, something more. A woman's moment is something for a man to find out. Had he kissed her just then, she still would have laughed, but Tom Steepe had not yet finished fighting himself from the failure on the *Singmaster*. She drew his face down to hers, but he was still baffled. She heard his heart pound.

"Be sure, that I see and appreciate the strength you have gained since the other night on shipboard," she was saying. "I know how you have fought since then, and something of the fight you have had all the years among the Islands. They told me of the Chicago news-boy coming to Luzon——"

His face searched hers with a keen hunting look. The bone of his jaw stood out white. She saw the questions dart into his eyes, and the excited baffled look that had to do with her tenderness.

"I don't get you, Lone Anstey. You seem different now. I was rotten to grab you off the reel the other night—but is it different now, or what?"

"There was a moment—oh, it isn't now! It seemed all a homecoming."

For her the moment was passed. She could hardly tell him that, and despaired that she could ever make him understand.

"It seems I muffed the right minute going and coming," he said sullenly.

"If we can do anything for Scarbaran and his people,

we must turn to that now. We must not think of ourselves. Help me, so I won't find I was wrong in coming. I'm sure we have something good to do for them. Ever since I was a child, I knew I should find some great task to do when I found——"

He missed something that would have brought peace to his heart that moment, by interrupting:

"Not think of ourselves!" he said. "You've got to show me how I'm going to get past thinking about you——"

"If we can only forget ourselves a little now—oh, you know a woman is always queer! She always has her dream. Mine is that we will have a greater story—if we can do some fine task together first. It may be only a whim, but something would be terribly spoiled—if we failed."

She had drawn a little back.

"We're not here by accident," she added slowly. "Each of us so terribly alone in the world—it seems we must belong—to these people."

"Don't we belong to each other?" he asked.

"We belong to Scarbaran first. . . . Oh, don't you see! I can't tell you, but you must see, if we are strong enough, if we wait bravely enough—oh, you Tom Steepe, you can learn anything! You are strong and terrible—and young!"

### III

#### FOG AND GLAMOUR

THEY walked back in silence. All that afternoon they were apart. Tom Steepe was busy with his soldiers, but his mind was not on that work, as on the day before. Much that she had said was too deep for him, yet nothing that life had shown him up to this time could approach certain full-breathed moments of this day. Never before had he been so conscious of his own lack of equipment; of the ugly patches of weaving throughout his whole being; never before had he met obstructions against which his mind seemed to have no power.

She had come to these people, even as he had come, finding freedom again like the return of a native. They were to work together—but she demanded that they forget each other and turn full tilt to outsiders. He had not met men, not even Rothatcher, who had shown him anything unattainable in the way of mind-power, but in the walk of an hour she had found inconclusive, if not wrong, practically all his mental holdings. . . . Tom Steepe smiled. She certainly aroused. He was far from aware how much fight there

was in him; how stubborn his own mind-power and feelings; that it would be utterly impossible for him to be taught, except for the quickening of his heart from hers.

They were sitting together that evening in his doorway. It was quieter there than under the main thatch. Bos'n had vanished with a frowning look at Tom over the woman's shoulder. Loril was occupied with his father. . . . She had whispered how endless the day had seemed to her, how strange and joyous; how her coming with Loril in the dawn was distant like another life, and their talk together in the deeper jungle, in some ways as far back as a memory of childhood.

She felt the strangeness of his silence. He had begged her not to go—not to end their first day at once, so she sat on and on, knowing better. She had been able to see their purpose clearer in the afternoon away from him. Her ideal was to be with him like two wonderful parents to Scarbaran's singing, summer-eyed children. The natives seemed strangely prepared to accept them. She had heard again from Loril's sisters of a prophecy or tradition concerning a white man and woman who were to come, bringing a gift of wisdom or power to the people. . . . She did not know how far his thoughts were taking him astray now, but she felt a deep loneliness, felt very small in the midst of an impossible task—a task at best for the world to laugh at.

There was that in him, because he was utterly tired, and because his pride was touched, that dared to question a bit of a woman's right to be two utterly different people at different times.

"Don't go!" he said again.

"It isn't really going, you know——"

He had not risen, but put out his hand, laughingly catching her dress.

"We are tired," she went on, "and I think a little bewildered. There is so much for us to learn."

"Much to learn," he repeated. "Aren't we getting a bit mad on throwing everything away? Why, you've just come. It's been hell all the years. You've just come, and now you want to forget that we're together."

He stood before her now, but she spoke, her voice faint:

"Oh, haven't you seen it everywhere in the world—in the tens of thousands of pairs where love began? Oh, you must have seen the tragedies—the myriads of tragedies—the myriads of poor little twos sitting on the roads with their babies about them—sitting in the dust of the world's roads, asking the way of strangers!"

"It wouldn't be like that with us."

"It wouldn't be—long!" she said.

"What do you mean?"

"I must go——"

"Tell me, Lone Anstey, what do you mean?"

"We wouldn't sit long. I think we would tear each other to pieces in sheer agony for having lost our way again!"

She broke the silence.

"Good-night," she whispered. "I shall be close."



## IV

### UNDER THE THATCHES

**L**ONE ANSTEY could see past the surface dazzle of his eyes to the thing Tom Steepe really was—the great grieving thing he was, in spite of the body and mind, so often backed to the wall and fighting the world. She held herself from going to him the next morning. Two of Scarbaran's daughters with their children lived under the great thatch. These and the serving women showed her a kindness that was very dear, a care that was touched with reverence. She moved among the shadows, laughing with the women, playing with the children.

The floor was the earth itself—a soft, well-worked clay that left no mark upon the hands or feet, but was singularly enticing to touch. There was a sense of well-being from it, as from the earth itself, a firm but plastic touch. One of the children bent to loose her sandals as she sat upon a pallet of skins. She saw that they meant for her to be barefooted within doors. Part of her weariness went from her in this contact with the giving ground, as if the fret and strain of a thousand pavements were being soothed and

smoothed away. From the doorway she could see Tom Steepe through the branches across the open area, as he worked at the war-game with Scarbaran's young men. Daily the tribesmen were coming in, the women told her. Daily the enemy was nearer. Each day the white man was more admired among the people.

Scarbaran's house and all in it was clean. The children were low-voiced and pleasant to be near, their little bodies cool like the ground, cool on the surface, but warm within like the planet herself. There was a queer delight in the presence of the women and the elder girls, their shoulders and arms bare indoors, the nameless fragrance about them that goes with a life of much sunlight, water, and earth, among people who eat little or no meat.

She loved the deep shadows of their house, the cleansing earth-scent in all things. These people were absolutely unspoiled. Their cleanliness was not of flesh only; their minds were untainted, their hearts still clean. They lived. They were accustomed to plenty. The great passions to get and beget had not yet touched them. Lone Anstey looked with amazement into the eyes of the young women about her—eyes of mothers, yet unhurt. It was not the greatness of life here, but the perfection of miniatures, that held enchantment. These people were true to their little dream of life, as a fine dog is true to its master—a direct, uncompromising fidelity. All complications of life, the great maddening array of facilities and conveniences,

were utterly unknown, yet nature continually nurtured and improved.

Loril came to the doorway toward noon. One of his sisters laughingly shoved Lone Anstey forward into the light. Many times in recent hours she had felt like an oriental woman, but never so much as at that moment, the hands of Scarbaran's daughter pushing her forward, her laughter following, something of the intolerable sweetness of the seraglio women touching her heart. . . . Loril stood waiting to take her to his father. They crossed a little court open to the sky, but closed by thatches on all sides. Entering the sunlight of this enclosure, a different sweetness touched her nostrils, something winy and unpleasant. The face of a white woman regarded her from the shadows of a side doorway—the face of a strange street. No one had told her of a white woman here. There was a pool with a movement of water below the shallow surface; tiny clumps of slenderest bamboo at the edge and padded mattings lying about in the sun, all attractive enough, but touched with a sensuousness that she had not felt at all in the other house.

Now Loril opened a door across the court. She followed under a low-ceiled hall, a smell of frankincense in the dusk, a strum of native strings, and in the shadows, a native girl, without rising from the matting, placed her instrument down and thrust a handful of long-stemmed orchids in Lone Anstey's hands. The stems were black and long as the bare arms of the

girl; the blooms white and waxen as camellias, but winged, distantly suggestive of cyclamen, and far more lovely. There was a peaked miniature collar like black velvet back of the throat of each flaring bloom. The fragrance was dry and restless, a continual sting to memories that still slept. The queerest thing of all was that the girl did not rise; yet all reverence was in the upturned smile.

Old Scarbaran's seat was raised from the earth, his face and shoulders in a shaft of sunlight. The features were grey and shrunken, the body bent forward toward the ground. A white shawl covered his bare knees, and at his feet, with crossed limbs, a huge old woman sat, bowing slowly to the stranger. Lone Anstey was queerly startled, a shock at first. Loril brought a matting, placed it close beside the elder two, and signified that she was to sit there.

"I will talk for you," he said. "My father and mother know only the Island speech."

There was much talk, but little that she had not heard. Scarbaran was grieved and suspicious. He was prepared to fight to the last man for his Island, but he had lost faith in life. Lone Anstey saw with startling clearness, indeed, that these two had lost faith in everything except each other. Always she remembered them as two sides of one thing—the withered face, the fleshy face; the little old man in the ray of sunlight, the heavy woman below in the shadow.

Passing across the closed area, a woman's voice called

to her. She thought there was a troubled look for a second on Loril's face, as he said:

"Go to her."

She turned to the doorway and entered the shadows. Loril had passed on. It was the voice of the white woman, and now it drawled from deeper in:

"Come on in and sit down——"

The first thing she saw was a dull shining god that sat upon a hand-polished bracket of teak. Then the walls of woven bamboo appeared, and finally, in a far corner, a couch and the tiny red gleam of a cigarette.

"I'm not up yet, dearie, but I couldn't let you go by without saying 'hello.'"

Lone Anstey felt the heat of noon for the first time. The place seemed stuffier with each step forward. . . . Yellow hair in slipping braids, a mouth that laughed through racking fatigue, eyes that danced with an underworld of meanings that had nothing to do with the speech of the lips.

"And so you came according to the prophecy?"

It was like the slam of a door, the outburst of laughter that followed the sentence. Could this be the prophecy Tom Steepe had spoken of?

"Excuse me, honey! Oh, you'll have to excuse me! There isn't much to laugh at down here. I heard all about it, and how he was to show up, too. Perfectly splendid management—you two. I've got to hand you that much. Have you two worked together before?"

Lone Anstey was presently made to understand that this was Rosie Bartel, the woman whom Scarbaran's elder son had brought home from New York.

"Rosie Bartel, my dear, but not come according to prophecy."

There was a shriek again. It had all been sudden to Lone Anstey, this coming into a dim place from the light. Now she began to get it straight, and she saw something like a comrade back of the tortured eyes. She laughed, too.

"It would sound funny from outside," she said. "One shouldn't forget that. But how did *you* happen to come to Tanalao?"

"Last thing I remember was singing 'The Last Oyster' in New York, at Dutch Newbegin's, Firk blowing a bushel that night. When I woke up we were at sea. I wasn't rightly there at the time for consultation. Honest to God, I wasn't. Firk says I jumped at it, but not me."

"How long have you been here?"

Rosie rolled over and laughed some more, then suddenly sat up and reached out her hand, drawing the other close.

"And you ain't sore because I kidded you about the prophecy?"

"No. I can see it would look that way."

Rosie stared appreciatively; then her face grew troubled.

"But how did you really put it over?"

"What do you mean?"

"You and your road-mate. Why, you two've got the world whipped getting here—entrée—best circles—first day. Not only that; you had 'em waiting for you!"

Lone Anstey laughed; the other asked in awed tones:

"Have you played together long?"

"Played together?"

"You and Long Face Chris? Is this your first season on the road?"

"Yes."

"You are certainly catching on."

Rosie now leaned far out of the couch and peered into Lone Anstey's eyes.

"I'd say you are catching on," she added presently. "God, I'd like to have brains like that. How do you do it?"

Silence was extended. Rosie lay back staring at the ceiling. She squashed the red end of a cigarette into a saucer of ashes, sighed humorously and took a new tack.

"Here's where I stay wise," she muttered.

"How is that?"

"Once in my life I'm going to score against myself, and not fall for your sort."

"For my sort?"

"Oh, I could, kid. One of the best things I do. You'd

croak yourself laughin', but I'm not safe with a woman. And God, I fall so hard!" she wailed.

Lone Anstey leaned forward. She wanted to know something now—wanted to be sure.

"And you've got the whole works, kid—still got the girlie mouth——"

She glanced close at Lone's hair and at her sandalled feet. "God," she breathed. "Not a burn or pimple on her! That Chris guy is deceivin'. Looks to me as if he'd beat a woman, but I'm certainly handing it to him for taking care of you. Oh, suttinly. But this is your first season together. . . . Don't let him ever get rough with you, kid. Leave him first! Don't stick when they begin to get rough. They never come back when they once start. We think it's being faithful to stick to a man, but it isn't! It only makes a beast of him anyway, for a woman to stick. Better listen to Rosie. Better had."

"And you say that you fall so hard—for women?"

"They only take me in long enough to throw me out," Rosie went on. "Can you see a regular housewoman taking me home to the ashes on the hearth? Women play safe with me. I'd rather have 'em than their men, if they only knew it. Men? Hell! I haven't had a morning walk without one since I was five. New one, going and coming, and never cared a dam' one way or the other."

"But I'm not afraid of you," Lone Anstey said. "I wouldn't throw you out."



Rosie pushed up on her elbow and stared.

"Run along, girlie, run along. I've promised myself I won't fall for you this morning. I can't afford to stir up all my red feelings again. I ain't young enough."

## V

### "I'D BRING YOU BLACK ORCHIDS"

**T**OM STEEPE worked that morning with the soldiers, but his eyes kept turning to the dim opening of Scarbaran's house for Lone Anstey's lifted arm. She had merely waved while he was at breakfast and then vanished again. He kept the little soldiers in toward the centre of the village, the better to watch that dark opening. . . . If only she would keep her feet on the ground, he thought. Some of the things she said wouldn't parse. For instance: "Tear each other to pieces for having lost our way again!" Why *again*?

There was unwonted feeling about his thoughts. Feeling stormed him and left him weary before mid-day. Nothing had ever tired him out like this furious heaving of big and little things which she brought. The Island war was secondary in comparison. News that the Anstey hacienda had been abandoned, like a capital before an invading army, and the hint from Scarbaran's spies that the Monk was about to take possession and possibly make his quarters there—these were little things; likewise, the Bos'n's grief and foreboding.

"She's 'ere," he repeated hopelessly, referring to Tom's envelopment in romance. "Oh, she's 'ere. But wot for, I arsk you?"

As the hours dragged on to noon, Tom became sore with waiting and repression. Flames of anger leaped from his mind as he thought that she might be keeping him waiting on purpose; and the heat became whiter toward himself that a thought like this could air itself.

Early in the afternoon, he strode out into the green nest of the jungle to get cool, walking along the bank of the stream and listening to the low talk of the water. A half hour of this soothed and combed him out a little. He was on the way back when voices reached him. Lone Anstey and another were standing together on the river-bank. It was Firk; his arms waved before her.

The voices ceased. The woman had turned, listening. Firk saw him now, and Steepe could have killed the boy for the look on his face, as he turned and walked back toward the camp.

"Hello," she said, putting out her hand.

The faintest possible suggestion of roughness was in the way Tom took it, but it did not change her smile.

"What took you so long?" he said.

"There was much to see and do in Scarbaran's house," she answered. "But it was really because I wanted to think—away from you."

"Looks to me as if you—as if we had been furnished

with a whole lot of chance for that. What did Firk want?"

"I don't know. One thing he asked was that I wouldn't tell Rosie. And then he spoke in a flighty way about treasure. He said if I expected to get treasure, it wouldn't be through you, but through him——"

Tom's face was white. She had been watching him quietly, as if waiting for his eyes to come to hers.

"What were you doing away out here, anyway?" he said.

"I came out to look for you," she said.

His throat was husky as he spoke. "They say the Monk isn't far away. Better not stray too far from camp in this last day or two before we move in to Kalilorei."

"But you were out here alone—still farther away——"

He laughed.

"But a party of the Monk's men might just as easily capture you as anyone else," she said. "Besides, it isn't fair to Scarbaran. You're needed and my being here mustn't make you forget."

"I don't get this forgetting-each-other part," he muttered.

"That night you came to the gardens of the hacienda, you left me saying that you could whip Haggard alone. You left me hurrying back to give your whole strength to these people. If we don't forget each other until the task is done, why, don't you see that the great

thing between us will slip by unaccomplished? It's really—life and death."

"But, Lone Anstey, we've just come together!"

"I know, but once in a great while, when a man and woman do come together, they find they have to earn each other still more, by doing something together for the world. They don't mother and father a little baby first, but mother and father the world, or part of it. Of course, the old love calls, but they'd die if they answered that *first*. That would be defeat! If this is insane, then I am insane. I see it more and more every hour. I see it more furiously when you come near me!"

They had halted on the river-bank, the camp not far away. She was a step forward and turned to him. For just a second now his eyes were held by an extraordinary lure in Lone Anstey's face, something he had not seen before. It was gone in a second, and yet she could have commanded him utterly, while that was there. It was a beauty that he sprang to obey to the utmost depths of being. She was lovely enough always, but this hidden fleeting magnificence! . . . Would it come again?

He turned her about the way they had come.

"We'll go back into the jungle, Lone Anstey!"

"But you said it was dangerous——"

"Nothing can touch us now!" he said with strange excitement. The dazzle that she feared was in his eye. He turned a second later, inquiring abruptly:

"Would you have come here to the jungle, if I hadn't been here?"

"I cannot—I can't be sure!"

He laughed. "You'd tell the truth, if it killed you," he whispered. "Oh, you're the thoroughbred, I've always looked for. Not on your life, I wouldn't have you different. I'm all burned out, hating things you say, but I wouldn't have you different. I'm all alive with you here—best and worst, up and alive."

His head was held back, his eyes piercing, but with an unsoftened light. She was not afraid of him; she was afraid *for* them both. He drew her along by the hand, and she asked like a little girl:

"Where are we going?"

"Back to the place we found yesterday——"

"I wouldn't go there now!"

"You wouldn't?"

"Not if I were you."

He shuddered a little. There was a vibration about her words that had something to do with the bad moment on the *Singmaster*. It quickly passed. He strode on, tilting his head back in laughter.

"But you'd go with me, if I go?"

"Yes, though I'd be very sorry."

"But look here——" he halted and laughed again. "I'd make you forget that," he added, in a different tone.

She bowed hurrying forward with him. She was strange to herself. There was some submissive thing

that she hated in herself. In that instant of bowing her head, she was brought closer to the world of women than ever before. The sense of sadness she had known all day became more poignant.

"We'd better go back now," she said quietly.

"Ah, come on! Don't shoot out all the lights in the place."

"The lights *are* out."

"Listen to me. The minute I saw you, things began to happen. You didn't know I went through hell on the *Singmaster*. I was sick to go overside—sick to put a bullet in my brain."

"Poor boy—" she said, in something of his own tone.

He laughed. "I've been under a runaway pull ever since, day and night—to hear about you, to go to you! I thought that was your lover—the one you went to on the *Singmaster's* deck. I wasn't close. Listen, it didn't make any difference. I wanted you just the same, lover or not. I knew it would be the same if it took twenty years to get you. . . . Listen, I failed aboard the *Singmaster*—and yesterday."

"You didn't fail yesterday."

"There was that moment, I missed——"

"That wasn't failure. Don't fail to-day!"

"But I need that moment I missed yesterday, Lone Anstey! I've always been without you. We've just come—don't you see? I need you—like a man coming in from the desert, like a soldier coming home——"

"Do you think you can plan on a thing like yester-

day? Oh, Tom Steepe, look at me! You know better than that. You know such moments cannot be planned—cannot be arranged for. They happen. They come up out of the ground. We can't run to a place like that, and expect to find them. . . . Our day shall come!"

"I want a whole Island alone with you!" he whispered. "We'd have a place like Scarbaran, deep in the jungle and another hut by the sea, high above the sea. I'd bring you black orchids. We'd bathe in the sea. We'd run along the strand together and lie in the sun. Then we'd go in over the hills—out of the wind—do you hear? Over the hills, out of the wind. And every day, we'd know more."

"I'd love it," she said. "It will come."

"But we've been waiting so long. I'm sick with waiting, and you've come! You've come. Don't you see—it's here! It's here, if you'll take it!"

"With all our work undone? After all our sounding words about Scarbaran and his people?"

"Damn Scarbaran and the people!"

She winced as if he had struck her. He pulled her hand away from her face and looked close. She was very white.

"You mustn't say that again!" she whispered. "It was like killing *something between us!*"

"Say—how could we spoil anything by loving each other?" he asked sullenly.

"Because we could not remember. That kind of love



would be like a storm driving a ship. Oh, I know you. I know myself!"

"It's got to come some time."

"I want it, too. I want it as you want it—the hut on the headland, the little place out of the wind in from the shore, the playing together on the sunlit strand, the little ones. . . . Oh, quite as you want it. It's all just as you say——"

He stared down devouringly.

"But oh, never again speak of Scarbaran like that! It was like death—death to some delicate new-forming thing between us!"

"You said that before," he muttered.

They were walking back.

## VI

### THE CREAMY ROBE

**H**E watched her disappear under the main thatch, and a light seemed to flick out of his own mind. The movement of her limbs and shoulders, as she turned into the dark, struck him into an extraordinary contemplation. Was it only for his eyes, this subtlety of grace? He had never seen the thing in the world before, and yet she couldn't be the only one to have it. It wasn't like anything he could think—this flow of grace in her movements—except vaguely it suggested a perfume and a song. Would some light flick out from him every time she turned her back?

His cheek burned with shame as he thought of his leading her to the place of yesterday, the home-coming place. She had nailed that right. He had rushed her forward, as if they could find yesterday's moment in yesterday's place! Always with others he had been the one to think of these little things. Always he had secretly cared for little phases or fancies that were strange to his associates. And now he was the bull, and she had to set him straight. He wished she would come back now. It was a lot easier to think of her than to get to work for Scarbaran.

At this point Tom Steepe was jerked up. It was what she had said again. Her coming *did* slow him up on the Island job. It dawned slowly that he had a whole lot to learn. One thing stayed with him: that glimpse of extraordinary loveliness which he had seen in or around her face. Only a glimpse, a glimpse like the flutter of a wing in the far end of a garden, and yet it had an invincible power over him. She could make him do anything, if she stayed like that.

He was in the hut. Bos' looked up reproachfully. Tom had just spoken and heard the insincerity of his own tone. It had merely been a sentence uttered with the idea of making the seafaring one feel less neglected. Tom saw now he'd have to go deeper if he changed the Bos'n's idea in regard to what had come between them.

"I ain't sayin' as 'ow. I ain't arskin' as 'ow, only it 'as 'appened, sir."

The last word was pitiful expression of the great distance that now intervened.

"Nothing has happened between us, Bos'."

Grey banks of gloom were depicted upon the other's face. He held Tom with a sideways glance and breathed long.

"And you say as 'ow nothin' 'as 'appened?" he tolled at last.

"I see your point," Tom said hastily. "Everything has happened, but I mean between you and me——"

"Ain't you 'eered tell as 'ow mates break, when a 'ooman crowds 'atween?"

"That's not the way it should be, Bos'. It *has* happened so before now. It will again, but that's not the right way. It's only because the man's so little, he hasn't room for a woman and a mate, too."

Bos' shook his head.

"One wye or t'other," he murmured mournfully, "doesn't matter 'ow, it's a 'ooman who slips my 'awser from all ports. Open seas I travel safe and sound, but as soon as I undertakes to tie in any dock, up bobs a 'ooman, cuttin' me loose. An' I 'ear 'er voice sayin': 'No berth, 'ere, matie, no berth for you.'"

Bos' looked down at the firm baked turf and seemed to immerse himself in another fold of gloom:

"It might be 'erself, I tries to tie to. Off she slips the cable the minute it's snug. Or it might——"

Tom reached an arm through the curve of the other's elbow.

"Bos'," he said, "all signs fail this time. This woman's come for me. That's true, but everything she's brought is good for you, too, or I'm not a white man. I don't pick up friends every day; never could do that. I've found them in unexpected places, once in a long time, just like I found you out by the P. & O. buoy——"

The Bos' shuddered, but his eyes gleamed.

"It's never less than now, with a friendship like ours, Bos'. Every day you can say it, *never less than now*.

And what she brings only makes it better between you and me. Gamble on that. Put everything you've got on that, all the time. A woman who would take a man away from a friend like you—I almost hate to say it—but she wouldn't be the right woman, and he'd be a sick man, not worth keeping for a friend."

The big face before him began to melt and move, like the first stir of warmth in the North Country.

"Why, Bos'," Tom finished, "I'm so sure of you, I'd expect you to take care of her, if anything put me away for a time——"

Tom turned his back, because it was rather an enveloping thing to watch the rapidity of the coming of spring among the glaciers.

Off and on through the afternoon, Lone Anstey saw Tom Steepe playing soldier. She heard his voice sometimes from the river, sometimes from the open space. It was whimsical, occasionally raised in mock severity. She knew the laugh back of that. Much was unfinished in him, vast reaches of undone things between them, but she knew Tom Steepe could not be cruel. She had seen his gentleness toward the grown children which were Scarbaran's people. She had seen their unerring answer—the marvellous devotion of children. It always threatened to bring tears to her eyes.

There were still moments for Lone Anstey among the shadows that afternoon, in which his big rough pictures of their hut by the sea lived in her mind, and

the other little nest back in the hushes of the valley . . . their play upon the sunlit strand together. Again and again she put them away. It was more than the words brought. Something within her furnished intimate and infinite decoration for his crude outstanding frame. She felt his power; she felt his thoughts, as he toiled out among the leaves.

Scarbaran's elder daughter brought her a little robe of creamy silk. From a distance she thought it was of some wonderful canvas, the strands were so thick, the weaving so tight and hard. The silk had been woven by her own people, the woman said; and the frock itself was so simple it seemed to contain the entire evolution of feminine wear. This was the beginning and the end, the full circle rounded, a circle beginning here among the mulberry trees, sweeping out through all civilizations and returning to its native thatch again.

A creamy little frock, heavy like gold in the hand, and with a girdle of silken braids. You might find it under glass, something lifted away almost out of the reach of price in a Petrograd shop or New York. And here it was, a pristine parable.

Lone Anstey put it on. The two sisters laughed and went away. She was alone; the shadows falling at last. There was a bit of mirror in the room they gave her. It seemed to have come out of some skipper's cabin, a round freckled sort of glass, doubtless shaved in a thousand times. The little glass told

Lone Anstey things that afternoon, things that could not be gainsaid. There was a smile on her lips. She wanted to go forth in the dusk in the little creamy robe. No one could quite understand how much she wanted to do just this, nor what it cost to put away the thought. When she stood in the doorway under the main thatch that evening and lifted her hand, she had on the dress she had worn from her uncle's house.

## VII

### THEY DANCE TOGETHER

**T**HE stillest night. Sickness gathered in the sky around the young moon. It was like some great arena there in the sky, partly cleared after a day of conflict—the turf stained, the chairs of the spectators empty, but out of place—the whole space in a still torture of exhaustion. . . . They sat together, as on the night before in the doorway of the hut. Bos' had stood his ground against Lone Anstey's latest approach and risked a white-faced "Good evenin' mom," before making dash to cover. Loril had appeared with the word that Scarbaran was moving back to Kalilorei to-morrow. The spies had reported no important change from outside this day. The two were feverishly tired. The night was suffocating. They spoke of the sea almost in the same breath.

"It's all so close," she was saying. "So close and so sad. The clouds are close. Haggard is close. Londal is coming. . . . Why, there will be blood—on the ground! One doesn't stop to think of that when taking sides. I saw you out there to-day, training them to aim straight. To aim straight at men!"



"It's the last stand of Islanders anywhere," he said hopelessly. "It isn't a stand against the white race but against the looters who come first!"

"I know."

"Everything else among the South Sea Islands has fallen into hop and hemp, fallen into rum and dope and disease. I suppose it's got to come to Tanalao. I can't see Scarbaran holding out long, but it wouldn't do for him to give in without a fight. Still, we can't hope to win in the end."

"We don't need to think of that."

"But ourselves—you," he said queerly. "If we stand off Haggard, he'll join with Londal. They'll get us. They're savages right—that bunch of Londal's. I've heard of them up in Pandinao. Scarbaran's out to stand to the last man, as I say. These little chaps of his will fight all right. They'll fight for me. But Londal isn't the end, you see. I was thinking of you—at the last!"

"We must not think of that."

"The whole outer world will call me a renegade," he went on. "I know something about that, from old Philippine days. You see, they'll get us at the last, Lone Anstey. It's only a question of time—even if we don't get hurt early in the game."

"We need not think of ourselves. Think of them!"

She pointed to the wick lights under the thatches. She pressed his hand to listen to the sound of singing. She didn't dare to let him know that all he said seemed

true to her to-night; that she couldn't hold the picture of their work together in this night, so harrowingly still. Tom Steepe didn't speak for a moment.

"All we know is that we belong," she said bravely. "We're needed here."

A trace of the old scorn came to his face. "You hear that anywhere," he muttered. "The freshest missionary out, is doped-up with the idea that all Asia and the Islands have been waiting——"

He didn't finish. It was some quality of the silence that stopped him.

He was in a steady tension lest she rise and go. There was a fight all through him—revolts, resentments, insurrections, a wearing torture, but he did not want her to go away. It maddened him that they could not always live moments like those when he had found her at the end of the hacienda path. He had thought being with her would mean just that—a dance together, a steady dilation of joy and power from being together. They had something for each other that would change the world. He couldn't tell what it was, but all feeling surged up in him—that they could know something immortal, find something forever in each other, even if they were locked in the room of a burning house!

A faint ray touched with red came forth from one of the thatches and wavered upon her face. He saw Asia in her face that instant; India, China, and the North were there. All garbs and scarfs and gears,

the races of oriental women have worn, seemed twined in changeless profusion among the shadows about her hair. She was a score of women under the magic fingering of that faint red ray; snowy plains and rainy tundras were her background, the hills themselves. She was in the air he breathed. The heart within him leaped to make their breathing one—to imprison something of her within himself. . . . Not only years, but ages, he had been without this thing which was in her for him. All thirsts and hungers and desires were in his yearning for her now.

He still watched the movement of her breathing in the faint fingering of light upon her throat and shoulders. It was more than passion that he knew, utterly different from the moment on the *Singmaster*. He was dying for that living breath of her in his heart. She was still, as the night was still. It broke upon him slowly that he could know everything that life meant if he took her now; that he could know what she knew and there would be no division. . . . They would *dance* together. He heard her voice, the syllables beating one by one.

"It's only a moment!" she was saying. "Oh, yes, I know the loneliness. It's only a moment, a culminating moment. It will pass and all will be clearer. Like a storm, it will pass. You didn't fail yesterday. Don't fail now!"

But he seemed to see a better way than hers. He felt the power to make her see. He drew her into his

arms. In the stillness of her, there was more of life than he had ever known; a divine fire playing about her flesh at his touch. He saw her face, both near and at a great distance, as their faces touched. They were one in the core of a great winging globe of light.

There was no sound of step. They knew nothing until the sleety voice and laugh of Firk:

"Oh, I say, Billy, forget it! Come on over, you two. Rosie sent me for you. Come on over and finish your party with us."

Lone Anstey, seconds afterward, heard him speaking to Firk. His exasperation changed, as he regained control of himself. . . . They would not go to Rosie's house this night, he said, but Firk stayed to persist, a whine in his voice. Lone Anstey slipped away. She entered the main thatch. A wick burned there; one of the women brought another. The native woman would have lingered, but the white woman didn't speak. For a long time Lone Anstey sat quite still; then she heard Tom Steepe at the door calling for her. She went to him without hesitation.

"I couldn't let you go like that!" he whispered. "I had to come to say 'good-night.' "

She looked into his face. It was haggard with fear. He craved word from her that all was well, but such word wasn't in her heart. . . . They had danced. It was like a dance of death.

". . . You can't blame him," he said fitfully. "The

poor little dope fiend was bound to be in wrong. But I'm sure, he catfooted up."

"Who?"

"Firk, I'm talking about."

"I didn't blame him," she said wearily.

She wanted to help him, but his own frenzy to find palliation in something outside made it impossible. They were walking away from camp.

"We're so tired," she said, halting. "Let's not go any farther to-night."

"Of course," he answered, turning abruptly. "I only wanted to tell you, I couldn't—I couldn't let you go like that!"

"I understand. I felt it, too," she managed to say.

She could not help him. She saw his face wrung like a clenched hand as he left her at the door—something yellow in it, as he jerked himself away.

The second wick sputtered and sank in its own oil. Time passed without touching her. Lone Anstey was lost in great coldness within. All were asleep in the rooms about her. Later she wanted light, found a match-box in her own bag and raised the wick from the dish to be lighted again. It would not last long.

She was writing. The page filled hastily. From the door of the main thatch she saw the native sentry, with matting about his shoulders, moving up and down. She waited until he was at the far end of his post before slipping forth.

There was no sound from Tom Steepe's hut as she passed. She avoided the embers of the evening fires, making her way toward the sound of the little river. A step behind, and now she ran along the path. If a sentry had seen her, he did not stop her from passing on alone. A dim diffusion of moonlight was still among the leaves. For a long time she went on in silence. It was curious that she saw none of Scarbaran's outposts.

Now the step sounded again, a heavy step. Some one was following. She was on the river bank. There was an edging of dry pebbles that shone white between the shrunken stream and the thick growth to the right. Along this she ran, without leaving behind the sounds of pursuit. The steps quickened with hers, and halted with hers. She was frightened. It was not Tom Steepe, not the barefooted native sentry. On she ran but there was no question now. Heavy boots kept pace with her, scattering the gravel behind.

In desperation she halted and turned. A broad figure came to pause, then came forward sheepishly. The man lifted both hands to remove his cap.

"Oh, Bos', is that you?" she breathed.

"Aye, it is, mom."

"And what do you want?"

"I saw you slip by the 'ut, mom— 'e staring at the wall, and not knowing you was near."

"But I want to go alone! You will go back to him, now!"

"Back to 'im, mom? Back to 'im, a-leavin' you out 'ere among the creepers? Is that friendly to 'im, I arksks you?"

"But he needs you."

"That 'e does, but I 'as my orders, I 'as, and I looks arfter 'is 'ooman, when 'e carn't."

"It's for him that I'm going!"

"That might be, mom. I can see 'as 'cw that might be. But I goes, too."

No passing the barriers of the Bos'n's decision. Lone Anstey resumed her way, the seafaring one behind. It was less that she disliked having him come, than that she regretted taking him away from Tom Steepe. Her misery was too deep for casual fear. Bos'n would not walk with her along the river-path, but kept her pace behind. Always as she turned, the cap came off with two hands.

Three miles along the lesser river to the Mirlapani, and that was but the beginning of her journey. Still it seemed the night was eternal before she reached the main stream. Once a dog barked; once they almost stumbled on a native-camp, but made a detour through the deeper leaves and reached the river-bank again.

The strange fortune which had stayed with her so far, deserted at last. A sudden challenge from ahead. Out of the depths of shadow, the click of a rifle, and not until that instant did the Bos'n take his place beside her. Lights were brought from either side, the rifle covering them ahead.



Lone Anstey heard laughter and saw the faces of Chinese among the natives gathered about. They led her past rows of sleeping men, sentries peering into her face from time to time—the scent of cigarettes.

A white tent shone clear among the shadows. They were halted at a distance and one of the Chinese went forward. Presently they heard the voice of the Chinese from the tent; then the voice of a white man:

“What does he say, Bent One? What’s that—a white woman?”

Then soft laughter and a drawling tone:

“Why, yes, I’ll get up for that. A white woman? Why not? I’ve got about everything else coming my way.”



**PART FOUR**

**KALILOREI**



## I

### "I AM YOUR WOMAN"

**T**OM STEEPE slowly realised that he had failed a second time. There was no use trying to hold against the black enveloping him now. The jungle might just as well try to stand against oncoming night. . . . He had hurt her. Yet even as that realisation touched his brain, he gasped to remember the loveliness that he had known. She had been all alive in his arms; in a kind of supreme stillness, but alive! nothing of the chill of death that he had known from her on the *Singmaster*.

He was stumbling alone to the doorless hut; back in the darkness again. He dropped to his pallet without undressing; turned his face to the wall. Bos'n came in softly, listened at the door, as if to find from Tom's breathing if he slept or not. Bos'n hungered to speak, but Tom could not turn. At length Bos' arose and went forth again.

Toward dawn there was a strange lull in the midst of pounding faculties—a few moments in which he saw differently all that she had brought. There really were not two sides to what they wanted. They ap-

proached one thing from different angles, possibly, but the object was one. To-day he would show her everything different. To-day, if she could only forgive him this once! . . .

He saw the grey dawn in the opening, and Bos'n's empty pallet. That was queer. Bos' usually slept mornings until a hand was laid upon him. . . . Tom heard the voices of the people arousing to the new day. It was the day of Scarbaran's return to Kali-lorei.

Loril was in the doorway—the yellow-brown gone from his skin, life gone from his eyes. A letter was in his hand. Loril leaned against the door. Tom could not remember ever having seen Loril lean against anything before. Tom took the letter and knew that the writing was Lone Anstey's, though he had never seen it. Even before the words grew clear, the message came up to him like the end of the world:

“I am not running from you! I am not afraid of you! I am running from further failure. . . . It isn't that the love we have known isn't ours; only it isn't ours, *now*! I am running away for a greater love than this. I am running away to give you a chance to find me in these little ones—to find me in the Task. . . . To follow me now, is utterly to fail! The very fruits of our lives would fall unripened. I am yours. I am always yours, but I want something of love such as was never here; some-

thing no one in the world can tell us. I want more, more than we can know now. Do not faint. Do not fear. I am your woman. Did I not come to you?"

He passed Loril in the doorway; hastily entered the nearest man-path into the jungle. A long time afterward, standing by the little river, his knees went out from under him slowly, sagged like a sick bird's, and Tom Steepe lay upon the cool stones. It was the most abject moment of his life, not because of the intensity of his suffering, but because of the nature of it. He was switched from the main-line of the real man, into the disrupted creature of the Islands.

"There is some one else," he kept repeating, though his lips did not move. "I frightened her. She don't want any more of my game. She runs away. She lies and runs away——"

## II

### THE SOUND OF THE SEA

**S**CARBARAN and his household started for Kalilorei in the early forenoon. Tom Steepe followed the old chief into town later in the day. A hilly village overlooking the sea. Scarbaran's establishment was contained in a high wall of logs, vine-covered and ancient, picketed at short intervals with twelve-inch posts of hard wood, like an elephant stockade. The garden within was a mere cultivated bit of jungle, almost fainting with sweetness at times, and perpetually within sound of the sea. The buildings were vast and low and nipa-thatched.

Tom was unable to rest within the wall, but went forth at once giving himself to the care of his men quartered in the town. Many of these soldiers belonged to the interior of the Island, and were almost as strange to Kalilorei as the white man himself. It was a diminutive mocking world that moved before his eyes. Fish shops, sweet shops, and shops with winey smell. Always the distant pounding of the sea.

Loril never left his side that day. When there was a lull in things to do, the black rose up before Tom's

eyes. His face was that of a man of fifty, the face of a man all but destroyed by the battle in his own being.

“Kalilorei! . . . Kalilorei!”

Tom Steepe's lips repeated the name. He had told Loril to stay back, and had walked down alone to the sea a little away from the town. His soldiers let him out of the stockade gates and he had found a path over the hills. There were seconds of silence, until his ears actually listened intently for the upraised voices of the surf. It was as if some giant, whom Tom Steepe could not hear, were delivering an oration to the seas, and every moment or two a great din of applause would break out from the swelling silence of the waves. This was the intermittent roar of the Pacific on Tanalao's eastern strand.

The hills breathed softly upon him from their stored sweetness of the day's sunlight. There was content in these hills—an evasive feminine content as from a woman positively sure of herself because she is well-loved. Sometimes when he was listening for the din of voices again, a fold of cool night air would roll up to him through some hollow, carrying a breath of ocean, fresh and briny, as if it had not yet touched the passion of the land. Now he left the high moon behind in a sudden declivity to the shore, letting himself down among the rocks in ashen starlight.

There were level lines of crawling white before his

eyes; and beyond that, the vast heaving purple, distinct from the luminous blue of the sky. The white man held fast to the rocks in the great crashes of applause. Then slowly, as he sat on the chill sand above the tide line, he became a part of it all. The sense of time left him; much became clear.

He saw the great rock-like valour of the Bos'n's friendship. He remembered the night before when he had heard the Bos'n arise and go forth, without turning from the wall, so lost was he in his own petty agonies. She had perhaps passed the door that moment, and he was so enveloped in himself that he had not known. The Bos'n had taken him at his word and followed his friend's woman into the jungle. Scarbaran's sentries had permitted her to pass, as in daytime. The outposts had doubtless seen her, but she was above their laws as much as himself. And she had gone, so that he might find her among the little ones. What could there be to that? She wanted more love, more even than they had known last night.

"God! She wants a lot!" he muttered.

He wondered if it would continue to be so. He had also wanted more than anybody else, but she came along and showed how slow and easy he was. For the first time in his life he had been ready to sit down and enjoy what they had, when she came, but she was up and away for deeper secrets, higher joys. He had been ready for dalliance, but she wanted the straight high-



way. She was for footing it night and day, on the rising road.

He looked back now at this long day and his hideous awakening to find her gone. The dirtiest angle of his mind had fulfilled itself then, emptying its falsehood into his consciousness that she was like the others, a creature untrue and running away. He had done worse, even accusing her of the shallowness of answering the attraction of some one else.

With cool venom he regarded himself as he had been that moment this morning. That was the Bottom; that was the moment he touched Bottom. From where he looked to-night he had never done a viler thing than to let that evil thought of her possess his consciousness. All day he had fought with it. The thing was dead now, but his brain and body were like a battlefield covered with slain. The battle was over, but the field was not cleared. It would take weeks of sun and rain and the soil's slow chemistry to make it clear again. Steadily he breathed deeper, falling into the slow rhythmic beat of the sea.



**PART FIVE**

**THE MONK FROM SOUTH AMERICA**



## I

### AT FIVE IN THE MORNING

**A**T the sound of the voice from the tent, Lone Anstey turned in the grey of dawn and looked into Bos'n's face. She was cold and frightened, but something strong and sound came to her from him—like a proof that humanity was sound at the core. There were grey shadows under Bos'n's bewildered eyes; ashen lines upon his chin and cheeks, patches as if a hard hand had struck the blood away. But she caught the miracle, so difficult for Tom Steepe to understand, that his tortured concern was for her, not for himself. He spoke, but she did not need to hear the words. The meaning was clear that he meant to stand by.

They were in the midst of planted lands. Chinese and barefooted Islanders were lighting fires here and there through the morning grey. Only one of each camp had arisen so far, the rest lying around in blankets and matting. Always their guns looked new. She saw fires of other camps across the fields; ahead, the trails swarmed; she heard the intoning voices of Chinese in the jungle behind. She was beckoned forward.

Candles were being lit in the tent ahead, from which the voice had come. A crooked Chinese beckoned and held the flap of the tent for Lone Anstey to enter. Now this Chinese vanished behind a purple curtain that cut the tent in two, and a white man came forth slowly, his head held high and warily. She saw a narrow face of greyish pallor; the thin lower lip looked double from an old lateral wound. The figure was lean and not tall. A red silk robe from Japan was held close about him with the left hand. His slippers were from China—blue and furry-edged. The Monk, himself, was said to be from South America. She was conscious of a red smoky gleam from behind the partitioning tapestry, and the scent of incense from snowy deodars.

She met the man's glance and there was a tightening in her breast—something cold, that coiled and tightened. His eyes danced with fiery pleasure in her coming. Now he was not looking at her, but over her shoulder to the Bos'n. It may have been only a second, but it seemed long. His eyes came back to her face and roved to her feet. For the first time she realised that her boots were wet and covered with soil, the lower part of her skirts drenched from dewy leaves. The Monk drew forth a watch from under the red robe and glanced at the dial reflectively.

"She comes at five in the morning," he muttered. "And where does she come from?"

"You are speaking to me?" she said.

"Little habits of speech—you'll overlook them—lit-

the habits of speech of a man who has been much alone. Yes, I am speaking to you."

"I came from Scarbaran's camp. I did not mean to come here. I was on the way to the City."

"We couldn't let you pass by—not without a call, you see. That would be incredible," he finished slowly.

"I do not understand."

"Why, a man's never miserable about what he's missed—if he doesn't know it. But having seen you, it's incredible—oh, quite."

She watched him steadily. His eyes left her and fixed again upon the Bos'n over her shoulder. There was a curious pulling quality to his tone as he asked:

"And where did you find this—where did you pick up your friend?"

"He has been with Scarbaran's people. He saw me leaving the native camp and would not let me come alone."

"You have been a guest of Scarbaran?"

"Yes."

Haggard laughed. "That's good," he said. "A guest of Scarbaran. We're all guests of Scarbaran. And you didn't know I was here, but merely stopped as you passed through?"

She heard his words as from a great distance. There was a deathly chill in the tent for her senses. Now he appeared to be computing on his fingers, and he turned back toward the curtain and called to know

the date of the month. The answer sounded as from Chinese lips.

"I'll remember this day," he said, "and five o'clock in the morning." The lips of his dead-pale face formed their sentences leisurely.

"If you've questioned me enough, I should like to go on," she said.

"I call that curious," he muttered. "Only a little girl would think of that."

He may have seen the fear that came to her eyes an instant, but he did not seem in the least dismayed. Turning again to the tapestry he gave an order, unintelligible to her, and a chair was handed out. This he placed for her under the light of the candle, saying:

"There will be breakfast, of course."

Lone Anstey did not move to the chair.

"You do not find it restful here at once? I can understand that. Be at peace. Another tent will be raised for you."

"I care only to go on my way."

"I call that strange," he said, in the curious pulling tone again. "Everything else, I have for you—even dry clothing and boots. Yet you ask unerringly the one thing I cannot give."

Lone Anstey thought at first he was trying to torture her, taking some cat-like pleasure in her dismay, but she had to give up this conjecture. That he was enamoured utterly of himself, and felt she could not



continue to resist the same charm, was more nearly true.

Never before had she lost her courage as now, with his cool smile before her and above the sultry candles—the face of a man with intellect and nerve, seemingly, but no soul. Here was the smile of a man who felt he could not lose. The smile meant more than taking over the Island. She read it now in his eyes and mouth. It had to do with her as well. Its invincibility was that of a man who has found patience and power on his knees in a cell.

She heard his natives raising the tent near by; saw the big face of the Bos'n clouding with sickness like death. She heard the Monk's pleased sentences. Now the flap of the tent was thrust back and she found red daybreak in the world. A Chinese parted the canvas again for her to emerge. Out of the tent she breathed better and her step quickened forward to the newly-raised tent. The Bos'n started to follow, but Haggard called him back. The seafaring one hesitated, then muttered thickly:

"I'll be 'ard by, mom. I'll do as 'e says now, but I'm 'ard by, until the last."

She was in the newly-raised tent, suddenly limp, as if ready to faint. Haggard's crooked-backed Chinese was before her, spreading a blanket at her feet. His face blurred, so that she could not tell if it were a smile of pity or the laugh of a demon that turned con-

tinually up to her. Now his hands lifted, ready to grasp her if she fell.

"I am all right," she managed to say, waving him from her. "But open the tent—oh, please open the flap of the tent!"

He obeyed with a dart; then left her, but came again with a jar of water. She pressed the cool water to her face, kneeling beside the jar and letting the water run through her fingers to the trampled grass which was the floor of the tent. Now she realised that the crooked Chinese frightened her less of himself, than because he belonged to the Monk. That was the word—*belonged*. Everything here belonged to the Monk. She could feel something of him closing about herself, when she shut her eyes. That was what he felt toward her—that she belonged.

She tried to find herself, her courage, by recounting in her mind events of her own recent history. Her mind now worked with smooth rapidity, recalling highlights of Tanalao days—the meeting with her uncle on the *Singmaster*; her pony ride from the Fire Opal to the hacienda; the coming of Rothatcher, of Loril, of Tom Steepe, the last night in the hacienda, her uncle's face under the white lights.

That was the end of clear pictures. Recent hours in the jungle made a flying film which composed itself for a second in the mocking eyes and twisted smile of Tom Steepe. There was strength in that—one

man on the Island who could not be construed to belong to the Monk from South America.

The Chinese was at the flap again.

"The General," he said.

She was only a moment learning who was meant. Haggard pushed the bent back of the yellow man aside and stood before her in narrow white shoes and fleckless flannels, a creamy sash at his waist, a broad drooping straw on the side of his head.

"Some genuine coffee and little things beside—a bit of breakfast together," he said.

"If you will bring my companion—the Bos'n," Leona said.

"He would not be comfortable with us——"

She did not move, until he signalled the Bos'n.

"As you like, this once," he said cheerfully. "There is plenty of time, and surely I am indebted to your broad friend for bringing you home to me."

## II

### "I SMELLED BABYLON AGAIN!"

**H**E was both frigid and gay. His treatment of the Bos'n was subtly malignant, keeping alive her hatred, but at every impulse to protest, something within held her firmly. The breakfast was elaborate. Haggard served the dishes as they were brought to the table, and ordered stout and gin for the Bos'n. When these were painfully refused, the Monk suggested vintages and brews and distillations, not seeming to hear the seafaring one's repeated form that he wasn't drinking a thing to-day. Lone Anstey tried to send strength to her good friend, who wiped the dampness from his face with a folded cloth, jerking his chair sideways, since one of its legs was continually sinking in the sand.

"... Not yet forty years old," Haggard was saying of himself. "You never know how old a monk is. You wouldn't think to look at me that the callouses haven't yet gone from my knees. Oh, the monastery wasn't all tainted, little girl. They worshipped their God. I worshipped mine. It wasn't all mumbling through forms. I hate to begin to tell you how much

power there is in prayer. Sounds quaint, doesn't it? Quaint and cantish 'way down here in the misty isles. But you never get past it, go as far as you like—the power in prayer."

Bos'n's horror deepened. Haggard's thoughts were incisive; chiselled, sharp-cut and polished. He seemed to animate them as he talked. A deep hush was upon Lone Anstey. She was watchful; she helped him to speak, showed interest in his words. Hers had become the deadly interest of watching her adversary for his weakness.

"They worship God, the old Brothers. I did, too, but my god's right here——"

He picked up a fold of his flowing, flesh-coloured tie, indicating a spot underneath.

"This is the god that works. I'm a living witness that he works. You'll see him work to-day, and as the days go by. And what were you doing over with Scarbaran?"

"I have been interested in his people."

"But didn't you see the storm coming—the storm closing in?"

"They were expecting trouble."

He laughed. "Trouble? That isn't the word, really. You wouldn't call a tidal wave *trouble*, or a new isle and coming up in the Pacific. You'd call it a cataclysm——"

He listened carefully for a second or two, his eyes

upon the purple curtain as if for a reverberation of his own words. Then he bent to her, adding:

"I walk softly about my master's business. Softly's my way. I don't mind telling you I had an Idea when I came here. This Idea struck me one night 'way up in the Andes, as I was trudging up-trail with a string of Grey Robes. Natives called them 'Grey Robes.' I'm not scornful of the Brothers. I was a Grey Robe, too. We didn't wear much underneath. Grey robes scratched, as you walked. Sometimes *you* wanted to scratch. Why, the world could never believe the self-control a man may come into by just refusing to scratch. Also, it takes self-control to handle an Idea. You won't understand me at all, if you don't believe that. . . . I was telling you how the Idea came——"

"Yes," she said.

"Twelve thousand feet high in the Andes—on the last fifty yards of the trail to the monastery, full night down in the valley, the last waver of evening red on the Pontiff's Peak! It was just that moment, just like that when I saw my Island. That moment I knew I had finished wearing hollows into the cold stones with my very good knees. Something was born inside—born whole and finished and ready for action. A few battles, a few burnings, perhaps, and I'd look out to sea from my own shores!

"It's the Idea that drives the action," he went on. "One man's Idea has brought all these little natives

running together. I came. I was led here. I sat down here in the little mountains yonder to think it out. I knew Tanalao was my Island the minute I breathed her, a mile at sea. She smelled homey to me. It wasn't ambergris I smelled, just fruit and flowers, like a man entering his own garden at night-fall, turning the latch and coming into his own."

She would breathe when he paused. Another interval of talk, and her breath stopped until there was an ache around her heart. She was not finding the weakness. Momentarily he became more formidable to her eyes.

"I hadn't been in Tanalao three months before the natives came a-running to me. And the Chinese came nearer and nearer, never knowing why. It's the Idea that drives the action. People who can't think, find a real thought irresistible. Not a man in this Island can stand against a two-year-old Idea. It's all so easy, there's no haste."

He seemed to be painting the Idea as he talked, or rather enfleshing it. There seemed something immutable about the force; its invincible establishment. His eyes held hers as he continued in a clinging sort of drawl:

"A man gets what he wants if he knows well enough what he wants. There was one old father up in the cells, who could do things—things which the rabble would call miracles. One saying he beat and burned into me."

Haggard laughed icily.

"Oh, I wasn't the right sort of a novice, but he surely left that one saying on my brain-pan: '*Cave ab hominem unios libri*' (Beware of the man of one book—he knows). That's what he branded on me. It works. Oh, it works all right."

His eyes now held Lone Anstey's:

"I get what I want. Why, I'm getting used to getting what I want."

It was like a call out of the far years to her, a summons, a challenge.

The bent Chinese was clearing away the breakfast things. She knew before Haggard spoke again that he was about to send the Bos'n away. She touched her friend's wrist at the corner of the table, as he had touched hers for courage an hour before. Haggard gave little time or thought to pretext. Bos'n was merely excused. He arose in a broken fashion, his fingers rubbing together.

"Now, tell me who you are," Haggard said quietly, when they were alone.

Her eyes had turned yearningly toward the full daylight. A kind of suffocation came to her with his words. It was as if he were ready to begin all over again. Haggard watched her curiously as she talked. When she mentioned Rothatcher, Haggard informed her coolly that the bearded one was coming to him this morning for an interview.

He flung back his head with a laugh and held his



hand straight up above his eyes, watching the play of his fingers in the air.

"I wonder how I could think with a woman in the room?" he muttered. "You needn't be actually present," he said reflectively. "You'll do nicely in my quarters—just back of the curtain. A little purdah of your own in there—while I occupy Rothatcher this side of the veil."

"You mean you intend to keep me here, to-day?"

"I really wish it were not necessary to explain," he said. "It takes the zest out of the room—to explain. My position here is between two camps—Scarbaran's on the east, and the Anstey hacienda and the open part on the west. A stranger passing through here must be detained. Primary usage of war, but anyway you belong with me. Your steps were led here through the night!"

He seemed to be looking back toward South America.

"It's the one thing a monk cuts out of his life—the idea of a woman coming. I almost did that, but you've awakened the dead. I thought once I had even burned out the remains. Yes, they knew how to murder the love of woman in a man's heart, up in that little string of stone-cells in the Andes——"

There was a harder vibration in his high laugh than any she had heard so far.

"That's why I went there," he added. "I went to the Grey Brothers to get that thing done. A woman was eating me alive. That's the truth. She had run away

from me. I think I must have frightened her—just a lad, too. She ran away, yet left a phantom of herself tearing at my vitals, until I heard the Brothers calling, 'Come unto me, come unto me!' They took her beak and talons out of my flesh. I stayed on and on, afraid to leave them, lest she come back."

It was to her like opening a book that belonged to a bigger, a more desperate world than this. There was altitude and abyss in the sweep of his pictures. Now she saw that he had not missed her absorption; that he found it delectable.

"Nearly twenty years," he went on, "nearly twenty years, six hours a day on my knees, until that dusk when I smelled Babylon again. . . . Winding slow, walking slow, a string of Grey Brothers winding up to the open gate of the monastery—and to one, the flash of the great Idea. I saw my Island, my ruddy little Island. And I swear to you, I didn't believe it till to-day—I saw the woman that was to come to me, when I found the Island all my own."

He took a lengthy Russian cigarette from a red-padded box, inserted the end in a bamboo-holder, turning his head to the side for the Chinese to touch the match. The bent one was too hasty, bringing the match to the tobacco while it was still in flare. Haggard struck the yellow hand away, waiting until the flame had burned to the pure wood. Then he explained to the woman that he did not care to inhale sulphur fumes.

"Yes, I want you here when Rothatcher comes," he added. "I want you near. I want to feel your thoughts working with mine! . . . You can sit in my quarters—just there, beyond the purple curtain. Of course, I've got an arrangement to let Rothatcher go back to Tanalao. It would spoil that if he found you here. Don't you see that I couldn't let him go back—if he saw you?"

"You would hold him prisoner—if he saw me here?"

"But he won't. You'll find it like a play—like a big play listening to our talk. It's been a one-man-army until this day," he went on. "It's been one of my little ways to play the game alone. Always alone, until five this morning."

She met his eyes.

"I'm very tired," she said. "I walked all night."

"Rest now," he said abruptly. Rest an hour. We'll make Rothatcher wait if necessary. I didn't forget you walked all night, but it's hard to let you go—even to the next tent. A man never knows what a bad light he's worked by, until the new one is installed. . . . But go now. You'll find things better in your quarters than when you left."

She crossed through the vivid day, the Chinese with the bent back walking before her. Her tent was dim with hangings, the turfy floor thick with rugs, incense in the air, a gold mirror in the far corner, a sheltered candle raying on the glass. Lone Anstey went to it and looked into her own face—the faintest suggestion

of a wide-eyed tiger back of her eyes—a dry stare, unwinking, something utterly alien and polar about it. Now she looked at the mirror itself, again. There could be no mistake that she had seen it before in her own room at the Anstey hacienda.

### III

#### THE INTERVIEW

SHE lay in her tent upon a pile of scented rugs. The place was dark, with great shadowy hanging things, as if the bales of a caravan had been opened and tossed about. The Bos'n came to the flap. Though the bent Chinese was watching from Haggard's tent, the seafaring one ventured to point to his quarters—a solitary tent across the field. He would be there, watching there, he said, whatever her need in day or night.

It was like a passion to her now, to be left alone. Every moment was precious. There was some strength she must find in *herself*; some strength must come to her before Haggard called her again. Her feet burned; they were fevered and bruised from the journey of the night. She had never been so weary before; she had never been so frightened before. These were little things. She must arise to the hour: she must find herself. She lay upon her back and deeply breathed. Her fingers tightened into the palms, in the stress of trying to still the furious activity of her mind.

Her eyes opened at length. She had not slept, yet

it was difficult to remember that it was still day. Her eyes surveyed the different weaves and textures of the hangings in the beams of soft light. An idea came, utterly curious: The tent was so small and so richly filled that she thought of herself as a mouse in a Christmas fruit-cake. Rising, she glanced into the gold-framed mirror again, and began to realise that she had become calm.

A soft step outside—yellow fingers at the selva-ge of the canvas. The Chinese cleared his throat and announced that the General was ready for her. She arose and obeyed. Her eyelids trailed almost shut as she crossed the space of vivid light between the tents.

Haggard was waiting for her, but went a moment later to bring Rothatcher, who had reached camp. Lone Anstey waited behind the purple curtain.

Life *had* become a startling play with her. She was drained and exhausted by the intensity of its drama. In the early days of her stay at the hacienda, it had seemed to her that she was learning men and life, but that had been like listening to the drama from the foyer, or to far murmurs from the street, compared to this day. Surely now she was down in the darkness at the feet of the players in a man's world. They were so powerful in proximity that her own fate seemed secondary, though it hung upon their movements. The hideous weaving of the Monk was everywhere, in everything. This was where he slept. Each object before her eyes had to do with the working out of his Idea. . . . The

voice of Rothatcher reached her ears; easy, jovial, cool-nerved; yet to her, Rothatcher was like a prize beast being led to a county fair. Was it to a fair he was being led, or to the slaughter? He seemed boyishly familiar to her now, as his voice neared. Haggard was speaking as they entered:

"... Yes, I am out for the Island. Yes, it's a one-man-army, this time. Not a white man but myself in this outfit; natives choose their own petty officers. I leave them pretty much alone, though I doubtless will make some changes after we get into action."

"You like playing it alone, Mr. Haggard?"

There was a slight delay before the answer:

"It's one of my little ways."

There was amazement in the bearded one's voice, as he inquired presently:

"And the Krag rifles? They look new!"

"They didn't come from South America," Haggard drawled.

She heard Rothatcher observe with a laugh:

"So this is the core of the big Philippine scandal. They are talking about who got these rifles in The States this very moment. You've heard that they caught Franklin?"

"No."

"He'll go up for life for that little deal, Mr. Haggard."

"He got his price," the Monk said softly.

"And you got the rifles."

She heard the bent one opening wine.

"... Modern rifles, modern equipment, and the natives outside of Scarbaran's big tribe strong for you!" Rothatcher was saying. "A lot of Chinese, too. Old John Chino takes war as it comes. He never gladdens up over it, but he sees it through for another man's money. Why, Haggard, it's your day all right. You've got things going."

Silence was unbroken by any answer from Haggard.

"I made a bad move months ago when I didn't see you coming," the bearded one added ingenuously. "I don't often make a miss like that."

"It was a weak time for me, too," Haggard answered. "I might have been persuaded to yoke up with you on that day. As a matter of fact, it wasn't in the cards for me to yoke with any *man*. I didn't know how strong I was. I thought I needed somebody's help. Seems long ago. All has happened better than I knew."

Rothatcher continued reflectively:

"Also my partner made a bad mistake when you called. Famous partnership, you understand. Best known in the South Seas, yet I don't mind your knowing that we nearly parted company just over that little point. I told that Victor Anstey failed the day you called at the hacienda."

"I've had better days than that, myself," the Monk said whimsically. "You or Anstey might have made a deal with me in those days."



"Why do you think I asked for this conference, Mr. Haggard?"

"Because you want something."

"Don't we all want something?"

The Monk answered softly: "No, I'm filled for the day—up and aware and filled at five in the morning. No, my yoke rides easy to-day. My burden light. I feel sure I don't want anything that you bring."

"You have heard, I suppose, that a young white man has taken over command for Scarbaran," Rothatcher said.

"A young white man—an American?"

"A white man, all right. You might call him an American, but Tom Steepe isn't like that. He's one of the unlabelled, a maverick to the bone——"

Lone Anstey's mind flashed back to her own talk with Rothatcher, when he had said that Tom Steepe had a big day coming, and something about a man in his eyes.

"Real Island man," Rothatcher went on. "He's got the gold in him. That means he can stand the sun; doesn't know what enervation means. But he smelled the Promised Land over on Scarbaran's side——"

"What does he know about fighting?" Haggard asked.

Rothatcher cleared his throat.

"Well, he was out with the Tagals against the whole American outfit in Luzon, fifteen years ago. Sort of

genius with the natives. I've heard that Scarbaran's young men are ready to die for him, right now."

"Does he live with them—the sort to take up a native woman?" Haggard asked.

"Not by the feel of the man. That isn't using the natives. That's being used, as you would say. A real Island man wouldn't do that. Also there's a white woman with the natives—none less than Victor Anstey's niece."

Rothatcher expatiated, ending: "We thought at first she was kidnapped, but my Chinese say she went over to the Island of her own accord."

"Did she know this white man?" Haggard asked.

"I call that queer," Rothatcher said. "Yes, she knew Tom Steepe. Came down on the same ship from Manila."

"And she vanished from the hacienda, just before I got there?"

"Yes."

There was a sound of one of the men rising.

"I'm taking a little look along the lines," Haggard said. "Care to come, Mr. Rothatcher?"

A straining squeak from the second chair. "As you like," from the bearded one.

A little thing, but she took some strength from it, that Haggard had been forced to break the conference, because she was there. In the deep quiet, as the moments now passed, she realised that the Monk's way was continually to strengthen his convictions by affirm-

ing them. These convictions looked true to himself, but they were not true to her, nor to the world, nor to the spiritual pattern of things. Something or some one must break them. The stronger he made them, the more he would be hurt with their breaking.

She heard their steps and voices after several minutes. The two were seated again on the other side of the purple curtain, and again there was the squeak of a soft tight cork.

"Calibre—you've got it, Haggard, more than a man needs in the South Seas," Rothatcher declared. "But I've got something to put in, too."

"Walk softly, there," Haggard said. "What have you got to put in besides money?"

"Consider money, first. If you have all you need, right now, you're the first man I ever met in that interesting condition."

"Look well upon me. I have all the money I need!"

Rothatcher coughed. After a moment's silence, he said:

"It takes time to get on one's feet after a knock-out like that. . . . I've been twenty years in the South Seas. I'd rather have it come to you from another, but it is necessary to state just now that *Rothatcher* is the big name among the Islands and the Asiatic water-fronts."

The answer came in a thin tone:

"Be at peace, Mr. Rothatcher, I have heard that much."

"Then if money is put aside, the second thing I have to pool with you is influence."

Haggard laughed. "Influence?" he repeated. "What has that to do with me? I come and go as I like. You have been here twenty years, and yet *I* am Tanalao to-day, not you. I even have your hacienda and much that was in it. I have your natives. In a day or two, I shall have Scarbaran."

Rothatcher's voice was utterly calm.

"I've missed nothing of this. You've come up from behind. You've put me out of my house, so to speak. But is the matter of influence altogether dismissed? I have been up and down the seas these many years. England, France, and The States are interested in these waters. When they think of Tanalao, they think of Rothatcher. With you or against you, the Powers will deal with Rothatcher. Suppose you take over Tanalao, and it looks as if you would, you can't stand off Great Britain."

"Neither can Rothatcher."

"Perhaps not indefinitely——"

The Monk mused: "Even yesterday I might have let you in. Less for money and this hypothetical influence thing than for your mind. Your brains are not all callouses. I love a mind to play with. . . . What you have to say about influence sounded good—for an instant. I was almost carried away. 'Up and down the seas these twenty years.' . . . 'When the Powers think of Tanalao, they think of

Rothatcher.' . . . It sounded rather good for a minute," Haggard repeated. "Only I happened to look into you, Mr. Rothatcher."

"Look into me?"

"Exactly. You've been 'double-crossing' the Powers these twenty years—playing one against the other, past doubt. You know something about Tanalao, they don't. You don't want England or France to start anything here, because they never stop. They move slowly but never stop. The point is: If you were strong with the Powers, you wouldn't be knocking at my door this morning."

Lone Anstey heard the breathing of the bearded one from time to time. Haggard continued to speak very slowly:

"I'm looking into you!" he repeated, and went on speaking every word with exceeding care. "You want something for yourself, before the Powers take over Tanalao. You want some free lance like me to come along and break old Scarbaran who stands in your way, but you don't want the free lance to get away with the Island. You want to break the breaker, while he's spent from thrashing the natives. In a word, your plan calls for Scarbaran and the free lance to exhaust each other and leave you free to get yours. You brought the Steepe person down here to handle your end of the triangle, but he slipped the leash. Now you hurry over to deal with me, be-

cause I'm coming too fast to suit. Yes, it was well that I looked into you——”

There was a second or two before Rothatcher spoke.

“Now that's extraordinary,” he breathed. “Quite extraordinary. Teach me that little trick of looking into a man, please.”

“Yes?”

There was an eager intensity of joy in Haggard's little question, not exactly an indulgence in triumph, but a full appreciation, at least, of his own great sagacity.

“But there is still another pocket in my coat,” Rothatcher went on, in an awed tone. “You don't need money; you don't need influence; perhaps you are aware of the pretty secret that makes Tanalao so desirable to us?”

“Home acres, good pictures, music, ice-plant, bins of wine, comfortably yielding plantations afar from travel-lines, incomparable climate——”

“The same on a score of islands under the shelter and stability of the British flag.”

“But not the same power and freedom as in a little Island all one's own,” Haggard said. “Here's a cosmos, a toy-planet. I like it for that—a miniature system all one's own.”

“Perhaps you're practising to run the planet,” Rothatcher observed.

“A game—a game to pass the time. . . . But

what's the third point? You don't mean ambergris? What is the secret of Tanalao?"

Lone Anstey wondered at the silence, and wondered more when it was broken, because Rothatcher's tones were actually hoarse:

"No, I don't mean ambergris!"

"What then?"

"If you know, I am of no use to you. If you do not, I have the thing that makes Tanalao the one Island of the world——"

"I have that, Mr. Rothatcher," the Monk said slowly. "Yesterday, I could not have said as much. To-day, Tanalao is round as a globe to me, finished as a bright red apple, the fairest among ten thousand."

She heard a glass set down, and the creak of a chair; then Rothatcher's voice came from a higher point in the tent. He had arisen and was going away. It was Lone Anstey's last link to the outer world, and yet if she spoke or called, it would mean that Rothatcher would be held prisoner, bringing no help to her and needless misery to him. Now she caught his words:

"This morning is unique and memorable to me, Mr. Haggard. Never before have I stood in the presence of a human being who could afford to reject the best I have of money and influence and knowledge. I stand checkmated, and am ready to be conducted outside your lines."

The two had left the tent. Lone Anstey stood with eyes shut holding fast for light and strength. She heard the Monk's step after many moments. She heard him speak impatiently to the yellow man at the tent opening. He entered the tent alone, and sat down in one of the chairs. Many moments of absolute silence passed before he moved and then called to her:

"Come out and sit down for a moment."

He hardly seemed to see her. His face was chalk-white, eyes riveted to some invisible point upon the table. He lost himself again for a minute in intense concentration. When he looked up, she saw a face harrowed and ridden with desire.

"You came from Anstey's hacienda," he said. "You knew Rothatcher. Anstey is your uncle. You must know—oh, you've got to know, this secret of Tanalao!"

That was the moment in which Lone Anstey saw the weakness; that the Monk was still at the mercy of himself.



## IV

### THE GREY BROTHER PROBES

A WAY back somewhere she had heard of the Grey Brothers of the Andes. From some voice or book, word had come to her of their forms of magic. Neither white nor black, but grey magic, it was called—grey magic of the Grey Brothers. . . . A second time, he said:

“. . . But you lived at the Anstey hacienda! You were there when Rothatcher was there!”

“They did not tell me the secret of Tanalao,” she repeated.

“And you have been over with Scarbaran’s people!”

“Scarbaran did not speak of the secret.”

“It really can’t be that you have failed to bring me this thing,” he said strangely. “It can’t turn out like that. Rothatcher knows something. It isn’t ambergris. I looked into the ambergris rumour. I camped along the ambergris strand. They didn’t lose me in that hoax. It’s something else and you must know.”

She had arisen. “You’ll excuse me, I am sure.”

He did not answer. She saw that he scarcely noted that she was standing. A keen sense of hope was about it all for her, because Haggard's focalisation upon her had been broken, at least, for the moment. From the instant that he returned to the tent alone after Rothatcher's departure, he had been as a man divided.

"Yes, go and rest," he muttered. "I'll need you soon. Rothatcher's a fool to think I'd use him. He'd want a hand in everything, for what he knows. '... When they think of Tanalao, they think of Rothatcher——'"

He laughed. She stood at the flap of the tent, but he still held her with his eyes, repeating:

"Absolutely the last man I'd open for the secret. I can get it cheaper elsewhere. But there is a secret. I felt it in him. Rothatcher knows something, and you——"

He whipped up beside her, looking into her face:

"You and I have got to get this thing. Why, we should know everything between us—if we can only dig it out. We can do everything *between* us, if we can only pull together. Run away now, and get some sleep."

Noon was near. Her tent alone would have been fiery at this time of day, but the heavy tapestries fended off the heat. She buttoned the flap of the canvas and drove a pin through. Then she bathed. Through the night's journey she had carried the

misery of failure and separation, dwelling in the old circles of imperilled romance. "We were failing!" she had whispered a hundred times, as she walked ahead of the Bos'n. "I was making him forget the natives." But at daybreak with the challenge of Haggard's sentries, she had entered a wider, steeper way; a longer, swifter stride demanded; blacker dangers, more vivid light; loftier midnights, more blinding noons.

It wasn't that Tom Steepe was farther away. His figure loomed; she was more than ever tender to him, but he could not help her now. He had his work; she was about hers. She had met her own enemy. . . . If she only had last night to live again! If she had only risen to the strength she knew now. The right word would have called Tom Steepe back to their real work; the right word or touch would have changed all his bewilderment to calm, all his passion to power.

Now it occurred that Tom Steepe must soon hear of her capture. Scarbaran's spies were said to be at work through the ranks of the Monk. To-night or to-morrow morning, word would doubtless reach him. Perhaps he would not wait for an attack upon Kalilorei. Certainly he would not wait long. And here she was ensconced like the argive Helen in the tents of the enemy. She heard Haggard's voice across the area between the tents. . . . Stillness again, as in a deserted temple.

She joined him outside in mid-afternoon.

"Yes, I rested," she said, a second time that day.

He stood back from her to note that she had changed her garments and put on the boots he had brought. He seemed to think she had done this for his pleasure. They had tea and cakes. Haggard talked of a coming battle.

"And about the young white man over there—is it true that Scarbaran has given him command of the soldiers?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You were with him when you were a guest in the native camp?"

"Yes."

"What's there to him?" he asked queerly. "Some strength in the man?"

"Yes."

"You saw what Rothatcher saw in him—what he called a real Island man?"

"Yes."

His questions rained upon her; his face always nearer. What did Steepe want over there? . . . What was he really doing? . . . Did he mix with the natives? . . . Did he know their language? . . . Did he mean to stay? . . . Would he fight to the last ditch?

"I think Scarbaran means to hold his Island as long as he can," she said steadily. "I have heard it said that his young men are ready to give their lives to hold."

"Why did you go to Scarbaran?"

"I told you that I am interested in the people of Tanalao."

"But you ran away from them?"

"I did—last night."

"You didn't think of running away until last night?"

"No."

"What happened?"

"It is important just to me."

"You won't—speak of that?"

"No."

"Did you speak to Steepe last night?"

"Yes."

At this point he diverted in a most puzzling manner. There was not an instant's hesitation, before he asked:

"And you mean to tell me that this Steepe, an Island man, one who has given himself to the natives here and up in Luzon—doesn't know the secret of Tanalao?"

"I didn't tell you that he did not."

"You what?"

"I did not speak of the American as not knowing the secret."

"Then he does!"

"I do not know."

Haggard sat back and performed with his fingers in the air. His voice was quieter, as he resumed:

"There's no getting past you. I shouldn't try. You and I—together. You'll tell me what I need to know

—all in good time. . . . So he didn't speak to you of the secret?"

She laughed inwardly, because he could not wait. "No," she said.

"And you leave the Anstey hacienda to live in a native camp—and you don't know Scarbaran's secret? Oh, you'll tell me in good time. To-night, maybe—to-morrow?"

She was silent now. It had come to her to let him think as he would.

"We'll get together. We'll talk. Between us, we'll know! . . . Hear me. Don't you see that your world is here with me?"

"No, why?"

"Because, no mere man of the world has what you want. Men out there want what a woman appears—not what she is. One has to wait alone twenty years to bring a woman like you what she's dying for. It grows in a man from being alone."

She almost spoke now, her lips forming the sentence that one might be able to wait for a woman, who could not wait for Tanalao's secret. Haggard pushed on with his own idea, however:

"A monk's the only man who has a chance to fill a real woman's heart. Not all monks! The many eat and sleep and go fat like other men. But one or two in a monastery. Perhaps only one—who dreams and dares and waits. Meanwhile he gets control of himself. The good Grey Brothers know the trick of

that. They teach a man to run the cells of his body—no two cells touching each other any more than atoms of steel; they teach him to run his own organic system, cell by cell, like the big Head of it All runs the stars in the sky—suns and planets and all the little shooters. Don't you see why you belong?"

She dared a smile. He didn't accept words from her. His own sufficed.

"You belong because you've come to a man who can command himself. No man could command you, otherwise."

Now she was looking at him level-eyed and unafraid, because she saw something he did not see—even the great sophistry that blinded him. Plainly he believed what he said: that he had accomplished self-command; yet written indelibly upon him, torturing and diminishing him at this moment, perverting all the startling truths of his training, was the passion to know the secret of the Island.

He missed the meaning of the new energy back of her eyes.

"You're a *woman*," he resumed slowly. "A man doesn't need any adjective when he means what I mean by that. I saw it across the candles—the first instant this morning. I saw a *woman*."

He lowered his head to look out at the sky through the apex of the tent opening.

"I didn't come right here, you know. Pontif's Peak back in the Andes is a long way from Tanalao. I saw a

lot of cities on the way; sat at many tables and watched the girls go by. Mostly, I let them go by. Twenty years teaches patience and fastidiousness. Some stopped for a minute, but I didn't have to look twice. A few, you might say, stopped for supper. I didn't ask them to stay. I looked around a little on my way here. Paris, Lisbon, Dresden, and Madrid. I watched the girls go by—the thirsting, the questing, the haunting-eyed. But the hour hadn't struck. It wasn't five in the morning for me."

His eyes upturned as he added gently:

"We're not anchored here for life. Dreamy island days together, soft airs and drowsy streams, but we're not to be drugged with Tanalao. A few months' work together—a million or two—and we'll want the outer world again, with Tanalao to steal home to, perhaps. That's the way it runs with a great workman. He plans out a job and puts it through down on the water-level; then runs away to breathe a bit among the mountains with his woman. I knew you when you came, just as I knew the others didn't belong——"

Haggard stood before her.

"Why, I can do anything with you in the room! I saw the great mountains again, over your shoulder just now; the great mountains grouped and lying calm over your shoulder, beyond your hair! I can breathe them now. I tell you with you here, the mountains came back to me again—snow lines, timber lines, and the flowers mid-way. Great slopes of yellow flowers in



the spring of the year—thick as the weave of a rug, solid yellow, so that you can see the yellow from away out to sea. You made it all come back to me; you make the future come close and grippable. Do you think I don't know the meaning of all this?"

As the seconds passed, she realised that this time he waited for an answer.

"No vision came to me about you," she said.

His face looked frozen for a second, but softened again.

"It will come. It must come to you!"

She drew back.

"You came here like one sent for," he whispered. "You brought the big Idea in clearer. You made me breathe the mountains——"

"You forced me to stop," she answered. "I was on my way to the City."

## V

### HAGGARD VIEWS HIS ARMY

**T**HE moment was crucial. She knew he would change now, either to deeper reserve or keener aggressiveness. Haggard stepped back instead of forward.

"You have been much alone," she said. "You have come to believe that thinking a thing makes it so."

"If a man can think, his thinking does make it so."

He was laughing at her—the face of a statue warmed and tinted. She was standing at the flap of the tent. He came to her again. There was something actually like admiration in his face, but appraisal as well.

"There's something I don't know about you," he said slowly. "You have something. You don't bluff, you don't cling. You have something that men die for—the thing they try to find in wine and drugs. It's only a breath that's come to me, so far, but it's magic. I seemed double with you in the room—I, talking to Rothatcher, you listening in there. . . . Hear me. You know him on the steamer coming down. You went to Scarbaran's camp because this Steepe was there!"

The abrupt change confused her again. The bent-

backed Chinese appeared before them on the other side of the flap.

"General?" he questioned delicately.

"Wait," Haggard called.

His face turned to her again.

"You didn't answer!"

"I told you I was interested in Scarbaran's people—in the people of Tanalao."

The warmth was gone from his face, though his voice was calm.

"So she doesn't answer," he said. "We'll forget that. I only wanted to know, because it hinges upon a little bit of literature I've ordered."

He pushed aside the canvas and took a broad red cardboard from the hands of the Chinese. There was a brush-writing upon it. He turned to the bent one, directing him to read aloud. The Chinese lifted his long-nailed finger, touching the characters one by one, as his words drawled forth in listless monotone:

2000 REWARD. DOLLARS IN GOLD.

DEATH OR CAPTURE OF AMERICAN.

WHITE MAN LEADING SCARBARAN'S SOLDIERS.

CALLED TOM STEEPE. CAPTURE OR KILL.

PROVE DEATH FOR REWARD.

GENERAL.

As they stood, Lone Anstey felt his eyes peering closer and more intent.

"The Chinese on the Island won't let this offer stand long without results," Haggard observed. "They're in the war for this sort of thing——"

She made no sound. She only knew she must hold his eyes, without madness coming to her own. She saw something baleful in his nearness; a kind of glare in his gaze. The uncanny nature of it was burned into her memory that instant. He had made her think of the toss of a wolf's head, eyes turning green in the camp-light. It seemed ages before he spoke again:

"You look white. You are not rested yet. Go back to your quarters and try for complete relaxation. We'll be up to-night, on the move to-night, possibly making attack before daybreak. You and I——"

There was a thin diffusion of gold light where the tapestries did not quite meet at the peak of the tent. Lone Anstey's eyes were lost in this golden shower for many moments. Hatred rose to her throat.

He had stood like a murderer before her. She had seen his soullessness through the green glaze of his eyes, as the bent one read the writing that called for Tom Steepe dead or alive.

She had lived years of girlhood that did not contain the strains and ordeals of experience that this single day held—a day still golden, a sun but little past meridian. Her eyes lost themselves in the myriad of tiny shafts broken by the tight mesh of the canvas at the peak. She did not hope to sleep, but tried des-

perately not to think. An hour perhaps had passed when the feeling came that some one was near. She sat up and saw that part of the uncovered flap was shadowed—some one standing outside. She called.

"It's me, mom."

"Yes—I'm coming."

She saw at first as the canvas parted, the broad-toed boots still muddy from the jungle the night before.

"Oh, Bos'n, is all well with you?"

"With me, mom? It isn't me as matters. I comes to arsk about you."

"As well as—oh, as well as one could be."

"I'm 'ere for reasons, mom—'ere to the end."

"It helps to have you near."

"I'm near, right enough—'oldin' 'ard and standin' by. It's for 'im in the other camp as I'm 'oldin' and a-standin' and because you're belongin' to 'im——"

"I'll remember that, but go now. The Monk—must not be angered."

. . . She heard the distant voices of Chinese. They had been foreign and confusing before this day, but there was an innocence about them now. Haggard's soldiers were endlessly stirring their fires—boiling fish, boiling rice, boiling water for tea. Fragrance of tea was in the air. It was like the breath of dried grass at the end of a long burning day. The scent of the myriad little pots was as general a suffusion as the smoke of cigarettes. A fleck of dust floated across

the golden mist at the top of the tent. It looked big as a roving comet. The faintest ruddy tint had come into the intense gold of the light. It seemed incredible that twilight should ever end the prolonged horror of this daylight.

Yet the sounds were different even now; the light was different. To the hundreds of soldiers gathered about, this day was ending quite like another. . . . She heard the challenge of another party coming down the trail, doubtless to join Haggard's army. Far off she heard a frantic cackle of chickens—some native poultry yard molested. At intervals, as steady as the drip of water, a lizard croaked. Many things that had happened this day, much that had been spoken, was ungrippable now, like a dream one cannot quite remember. The day had opened within her unfamiliar areas of her own consciousness.

She must have slept a few moments, for the sounds were different. The light at the apex of the canvas had mellowed into the richness of the tapestries. By the feel of the air she knew the sun had gone down. The camp was in a low din, and up through all sound and activity came the smell of the earth. It was almost fruity in its redolence. As she moved softly about, she heard a step and a touch upon the outer canvas. It was like a claw being drawn gently across the weave. This was the manner of the knock of the yellow man with the bent back. He brought a basket of fruit and flowers, reporting that the Gen-

eral was expecting her for dinner, which was soon to be served.

Minutes afterward, Haggard himself came for her. The chill came back with his nearness, the recoil of every faculty. There seemed no background to him—lights and shadows all visible to the physical eye.

“We’ll look around a few minutes,” he said.

The sky was still coloured. The sun had vanished but was back of the hills, not yet over the horizon-line. A smoky summer evening. The valleys were drenched with cooling glooms of purple and amethyst. He led her among the fires that dotted the planted lands. The little soldiers rose to their feet as they approached—barefooted soldiers; many of the Islanders with furtive eyes and crooked backs, faces such as were never seen among Scarbaran’s people. She forgot herself in pity for them.

“See the spring and gristle to ’em!” Haggard said. “Rothatcher saw it this morning. I feed ’em. You can tell that. I’ll pay ’em, too, before we’re done. They’re not afraid.”

“You spoke of attack to-night.”

“Possibly by morning,” he said. “We don’t move till moonrise. That’s two hours away. It’s dinner now—dinner for us and quiet together.”

## VI

### “A MAN KNOWS BETTER”

SHE scarcely remembered that dinner, except that Haggard ground the heel of his boot into the bare instep of the bent Chinese, because there was a fleck of lint on one of the glasses. His face did not change colour or expression, as he explained:

“This lame crook understands me. We get along very well, though he knows better than to be careless.”

The yellow man had not even winced.

There were moments in which the Monk leaned close in animation, but she knew his mind was devouringly at work upon matters concerning the secret; that his interest in her for the time was forced. Upon the little table between them, a great white cloth was spread in many folds. The napkins were as large as the board itself. All dinner effects were carried on in the shadow of the punchbowl—a great pile of crystal in the centre, holding the light of massed candles. Instead of clapping his hands for his servant, Haggard tapped together two pieces of black, hand-polished wood. The bent one would appear as out of



the ground. . . . She saw the Monk this night as if the word *Lie* were written in faint purple upon his pallid features; eyes that burned with untellable pain, a face gaunt from wanting, the really great force of him caught in the furious waste of his desire for power.

Even before they had left the table she heard them packing the ponies outside. He brought her a long linen coat for the saddle, and a wide straw hat like the one he wore himself. When he mounted before her, one of the Chinese holding his bridle-rein, she saw more priest and less soldier than at any time that day.

The force moved softly out from the planted lands. The moon, almost full, was well risen, and the smell of the land had something of the dryness of autumn in it, the smell of leaves that the sun had curled, and of earth dried deep. Often the Monk wheeled his pony close. Once his hand quickly closed over hers which held the bridle-rein. In the start of it, her far heel touched the pony, and he trotted a step, setting her free. She had made no sound.

"I want you," he whispered, riding up. "I want you so fiercely that I can wait!"

She wasn't frightened as before, in and near the tents; utterly strange, the force of her calm now. She seemed a part of the night itself—strangely diffused among ocean and island elements, sometimes listening for the sea, sometimes hearing the jungle sounds

of night. She seemed fixed with Haggard in some weird tableau, fixed in the white of the moon—ponies moving far below.

"It's all coming true," he whispered, "true in every detail. Look at us to-night—and twenty-five hundred men behind us!"

His laugh was in the air—now strikingly foreign to his face. His pony stumbled. Haggard dug in his spurs, at the same time prying open the little mount's jaws with a vicious curb. No, he was not a horseman. She knew it from the vent of his temper, from the curve of his shoulder and the ugly angle of his elbow in the moonlight. It was like something out of the sick and stale heart of Spain. This was the man who had crushed his heel into the bare instep of his Chinese servant.

A sudden gust of emotion surged through her that she was nearing Tom Steepe; every step bringing her toward his camp. She seemed to hear again the sound of the sea. . . . Last night at this time she had been with him, and they had failed—not Tom Steepe alone, but she with him, because she had not risen to the moment and made him remember. Only last night. She who was Lone Anstey then seemed like a girl to the eyes that looked back now. Haggard's voice banished her thoughts.

"We're treading the little Island under our feet! It is breathing up to us to-night—to-night in the moonlight. I tell you, it's all working out!"

Lone Anstey laughed.

"You're blinded by what you want," she said steadily. "You did not really believe that a woman belonged to the vision, until I came. You told me very clearly. All day you have been fitting me in. You gazed across the Pacific a thousand hours until out of your wanting the picture formed. All that has come so far will rise and rend you, because you can only win the love of a people by setting them free. You can only win the love of a woman by setting her free."

"It's very pretty," he answered. "Your sentences are turned. Very pretty, but its old stuff you draw from. It's cant, little girl, like the drum-drum monotony of the Brothers that I listened to so long. A man knows better."

The moon began upon its downward curve, sailing as serenely into the west as it had climbed. There were many intervals of silence as they rode. The voices of the trailing army, laughter, bits of talk and song, ceased as the hours of march drew on. It was all a whisper now, whisper of bare feet and sleepy tongues. Lone Anstey wondered at her own unruffled stillness. Often her thoughts turned to the Bos'n who trudged a little way back, head to head with his pony. He would trust himself to a ship or even a ship's boat, but a little Island mount with sprawly legs, so far as Bos'n took it, was a thing to be led

like a dog upon a string. Occasionally she could faintly see that broad weary face.

Two hours after midnight a courier from Haggard's point of scouts hurried in with the word that he had approached Scarbaran's jungle position, and there appeared no signs of outposts there. Some time afterward, a second report verified the point that the jungle position was unoccupied.

"We'll meet them by the sea," Haggard said softly. "It means that the first battle will be fought for Kalilorei itself, not for a mere jungle settlement. It's nearly three now. We'll wait for dawn. We'll have our coffee and watch the dawn come up in the place they've left—the place you left last night."

He laughed and added:

"You'll show me your guest-chamber?"

But Haggard was mercifully busy in that halt in Scarbaran's camp, and Lone Anstey watched the dawn rise and had her coffee alone, standing in the shadow of the main thatch. The night before she had parted from Tom Steepe just across the area at the doorway of his hut—his tortured tones in her ears, as he answered Firk's whining banter. It was like the sorrows of girlhood returning to one who comes home a woman. She even passed through the rooms where she had tarried with Scarbaran's daughters, and across the area where she had first heard Rosie Bartel's mocking laughter—Rosie who had not come according to prophecy. . . . A queer sacrilege about it

all, this hungry haste of Chinese and Islanders among the foliage; this breaking of branches, building fires, where she had found deep-delved peace, secrets from the earth itself and the haunting charm of the life among the leaves. It all looked smaller now, even the main thatch shrunken; litter upon the clean-swept paths, pony tracks marring the doorways and the threshing floor.

In early forenoon they were in the saddle again, presently to enter the lower jungles between the camp and the town. Single file, after more than an hour, a narrow path, damp with the night shadows and running fat with jungle greens! Now it was a mere man-path, crossing a broad lake of bamboo, the ponies sweating ankle-deep in black water; above, a blinding sky.

An instant of great stillness was then broken by a single rifle crack, a pinging, cutting dart through the leaves. She saw Haggard's hunched shoulders falling sidewise, an utter breach of decent grace in reaching the ground. His face turned to her. She felt her own mouth open with a laugh, as the volley sounded.

"Get down!" he gasped. "They're firing!"

A savage storm of bullets among the leaves; inconceivable pressures of force about her ears, the first yelping cries of wounded in the long trailing file behind. Lone Anstey slid to the ground, holding to her bridle-rein. That volley seemed interminable. She was not touched, but she felt the wind of the slugs

as they gouged past just above. She bent her arms to incline closer to the black mud. Then her pony screamed, arose straight, pulled the rein free and fell back to stay.

Now she could see the Monk again. He was rising to his knees, the fire having slackened. He was getting himself in hand, eyelids shut, hands folded before him, lips moving in prayer. There seemed almost a violence to his concentration, a bloodless rigidity in his features, before his eyes opened and fixed upon her.

"It is the first fire," he said. "I was told to lie close to the ground during a volley——"

She was too dazed to laugh.

He forced himself to stand, brushed past as she kneeled. Then she heard his high-pitched tone grow clearer and fuller as he yelled commands to his men. The Bos'n reached her. She could hardly think, or she would have made him take her forward toward Scarbaran's men, instead of back.

**PART SIX**

**THE TWO TENTS**





## I

### THE REAL TREASURE

ALL through his first day at Kalilorei, Tom had pressed Loril for news from Scarbaran's spies in regard to Lone Anstey's arrival in the City, but even when he came back from the shore at night-fall there was no word. Loril joined him in his quarters. Though hours drew on, he did not leave the doorway. Tom could not sleep and was glad to have him there. Finally Loril, after a few minutes' absence, declared that it was "necessary" for Tom to hear the story of Tanalao's real treasure.

The white man had not much to give in the way of attention, but he sank down upon the couch, the native boy sitting close. Slowly the two feathered punkahs above began to sway. Loril went outside to find the servant who pulled the thongs, and dismissed him quietly.

"It is only a little time. We can do without fans," he said to Tom, as he returned.

Then he traced a devious tale of sunken treasure up the years until it touched the life of a certain Portuguese who made the mistake of all his days in telling

what he knew to "the black beard with the ugly name."

In spite of the agony Tom was going through, his interest was really attracted at this point. Loril had spoken of Rothatcher in this way once before.

"From that time Tanalao has not been the same for our people," the boy said. My father believes that the black beard destroyed the Portuguese and his ship, wanting Tanalao and her secret for himself. Steadily the black beard has made himself stronger in possessions on the other side of the Island. At one time my father would have joined with him, except for the tradition that the peace of our people would be broken forever because of Tanalao's secret. Since I have been grown, we have heard much talk of great fortunes, supposed to be in our hands from the strand of the whales beyond the mountains. The black beard started that talk."

"But wasn't it Firk who talked too much in New York—didn't Firk have something to do with this ambergris story?" Tom whispered.

"My brother may have spoken laughingly of ambergris while he was away in America, but he would not tell the real story."

Loril's head bowed gravely in the darkness.

"From the beginning we have been taught to keep that secret. It is part of the tradition that has to do with our lives here. The secret of Tanalao is the one memory to be kept locked in the hearts of those who are fathers to the people. My brother might

talk of treasure of ambergris, and play with listeners to astonish them, but the secret itself, which has been given alone to him and to me, in all the years since we were born, would not pass his lips neither in wine nor sleep nor any weakness."

"So Rothatcher knows this secret?" Tom mused.

"Yes."

"Learned it from a Portuguese, who learned it from an old sailor, who alone survived from a certain long-ago shipload?——"

"Yes."

"Your father, yourself, Firk, Rothatcher, and probably Victor Anstey know the secret—who else?"

"My mother knows," Loril said. "You are to hear now, at least, part."

"Why am I to hear? I can live without it."

"You have given yourself to us. The hour has come for us to stand with you, if we are to stand at all."

"This gold-thing gets most of us," Tom warned. "Better be sure I'm safe. The word *Gold* was like the voice of a dear one to me—once," he added queerly.

Loril's mind was not to be changed. He told a tale that made Tanalao one of the dynamic spots on the map of the Pacific. . . .

"To-morrow, if there is time, I will take you to the place in the harbour," he concluded. And now I have to tell you that the bearded one with the ugly name and the Monk from South America were together this morn-

ing. Nothing is known of what was said, but black beard would not tell the secret of our treasure, except for a great price or a great purpose."

"Why does Rothatcher always talk of ambergris?" Tom asked.

"He means to bring a force here through such talk, to weaken or destroy us, and this force, finding the ambergris part just a story, will presently break up or go away. If he fails in everything, he can still sell the secret to England at the last."

And now Tom's mind left the whole treasure tale and gave itself again to the pitiless mystery that he must not follow the woman, but find her instead among these people. . . . "Find me among the little ones," she had said. And she wanted a bigger love than he had ever heard of before—something bigger than he could muster just now. It was a stiff grade that she led, but something deep within told him it led Somewhere. His face flushed, even now in the darkness, as he thought of her going away. Many minutes he lay in the open doorway staring out into the pale night.

It was now but a little past one in the morning.

There was a thud of bare feet on the turf path outside. A native runner, bare to the waist and drenched from exertion, hastened forward. Loril took his report and turned to Tom Steepe, who had hurried out.

"The Monk has started this way," Loril declared. "He left his camp in the planted lands before ten

to-night—three hours ago. It means that he's more than half-way to the jungle camp now."

Tom didn't answer for a moment. He reached into his coat that had been cast off and drew forth a cigarette.

"You might go over that last again," he said.

Loril repeated the information the courier had brought.

"How long do you suppose he'll hang up at the abandoned camp?" he asked.

Loril shook his head.

"It may be that he'll come right on," Tom said. "In which case we better go out to meet him. Yes, before light, we ought to be lying up in those thick bamboo hollows three miles inland. They used to use that sort of screen-stuff with effect in the Philippines. It wouldn't do for us not to go out and meet the priest."

## II

### TOM'S BAMBOO SCREEN

**T**OM left the larger half of Scarbaran's soldiers in the stockade at Kalilorei and marched with the rest quietly out of the town an hour before dawn. They reached the low lakes of bamboo as the day was breaking, and Tom strung his force thinly along the trail, secreting over a half-thousand of the eager tribesmen in the thickly woven canes; ankle deep in water for the most part. The trail was quickly commanded from either side, but at no length were the soldiers placed on both sides, lest they find themselves presently within range, destroying each other. There was full light in the sky when Tom sent messengers along his force with added injunctions for perfect stillness and no cigarettes.

"They will be still," Loril said. "All is clear to us now. They would wait the full day round, without sound and without food."

Tom realised that he had been impressing the simple plan with a sort of nervous tension. As he began to look upon the calm, earnest faces of the nearer lines, something new and valid came to him. He had been

estimating their intelligence according to the old Tagal standards learned in Luzon with Perry Chase, but there was something here above that; something which might even be quaintly termed *morale*.

Tom rubbed his hand across his wet brow. Lone Anstey was never far from his mind. Fragments from all their talks together came to his brain like dreams one could not quite remember. The last evening with her sometimes seemed long ago, as if belonging to another Island; remote and mysterious like the secret of the Tai Ming wine. He was tired now in the lull of waiting for the Monk's army—hardly able to cope with affairs less tangible than little dark men and their old gleaming guns, tight-woven roots, sucking water underfoot and the whitening sky above the feathery bamboo screens. . . .

He was dropping into the black abyss again; thought of Lone Anstey and his failure that sent her away; no word even that she had safely reached the City. It was hardly fair. . . . He laughed at that last cringing of his mind. One thing he seldom fell for was self-pity.

Two other runners had come in. Loril approached with a bit of white paper in his hand.

"The Monk has halted in the dry jungle camp we left yesterday!" the boy said. "His whole force is with him and many pack ponies."

"What chance have we of keeping this movement of ours from him?"

"I believe there is not one unfaithful among us."

"It's almost too good that he would drop into our little trap. Anyway, it's set," Tom added.

Loril's eyes fell to the paper in his own hand.

"What have you there?" the white man asked.

"It's about you. A copy in our symbols of a red board which was passed from hand to hand among the Monk's soldiers yesterday."

Loril now read aloud Haggard's offer of reward for the white man, dead or alive.

Tom smiled grimly. "But that sort of assassination-thing sometimes has a kick-back to it," he remarked.

Loril's eyes were puzzled.

"I've sort of kept off trying to get him personally, so far," Tom mused. "Perhaps we'll get a look at the Monk this morning—if he only comes on."

It was a hard half-hour before word was brought that Haggard had broken camp and was coming on toward Kalilorei.

"He'll be here in an hour," Loril added. "Our runner gained that much."

A great stillness settled. Tom's mind was often away, probing the trails to Tanalao—at the Fire Opal and along the water-front of the open port. Lone Anstey's disappearance was suffocating him.

"We shall hear to-day," Loril whispered, with quiet sympathy. "One of our watchers shall surely bring in word from her to-day."



Tom was ensconced near the tail of his line toward Kalilorei. In that hour he learned to value the espionage system of his little force, for the messages were momentary. Word reached him of the length of Haggard's line, clearing details in regard to the number of pack ponies, and finally that an unknown white man rode with the Monk himself. It seemed more than he could ask that this formidable revolutionist, who for months had been menacing the very life and breath of Scarbaran's people, should softly and surely flow into the close range of Scarbaran's long-treasured guns.

Yet it was so, even now, for Tom Steepe heard the distant squeal of the pack-beasts coming on, and the low voices of the native scouts as they filed in before him. Tom was holding the first volley until Haggard reached the point of the trail opposite his own position, but one of his boys was over-eager. The isolated rifle-crack gave the trap away, and Tom raised his hand to order the volley, a full minute, possibly two, ahead of the plan.

No simultaneous crash. The most admiring friend of Tom's little soldiers would have called that thunder of ancient pieces along the line a ragged volley; but Scarbaran's men and boys were not firing blind at the trail. They had been told to watch for white coats, for the glint of rifles in the sun—to aim where life moved, to make every cartridge count.

Now the scream of wounded came queerly shocking

to the white man's ears through the thick screen of bamboo. It was sickness in his throat—something like killing a pet for food. He shook this from him; impatient, too, with the great *tiredness* he felt. Loril's lips moved with native words Tom did not understand—Loril always beside him—and the click of breechbolts as his men loaded again became a nauseating business all different from anticipation.

To this point Tom had not tried to see the trail, but he moved forward now until the stems thinned and his eyelids narrowed in the strong light. Ponies down and a man or two shaking on the black-wet trail! He heard the thud of the turned pack-trains, as the laden beasts galloped back through the disordered lines. Then for an instant, a deep hush fell upon his faculties, for one white man back on the trail had found his voice. It was high-pitched, a madness in it, and yet Tom was whirled back into the rainy jungles of Luzon. For a second it made him remember Perry Chase on the war-path again—the great mouth open wide, and the big bell tones that had made the little scurrying natives stand and deliver in spite of themselves.

It wasn't that this voice was like Perry Chase's. There was no voice like his. But a deadly peril was in this, something startling in the cry of it, like the challenge of a great cat that you could never quite see for the foliage of the shadows.

Tom stepped down on the open trail. The thing

he had set about to do was well done; defence for Scarborough well-started. Haggard's big line had been thrust back in keenest disorder by a force one-fifth its size. . . . The Monk was a dirty fighter. He had left his wounded on the trail—little white-clothed ones shaking in the mud; here and there a loose sleeve raised and fluttered like a kerchief, signalling.

Tom ran forward now lest his own men knife the wounded, as the Tagals used to do. He saw Loril's smile as he called:

"Let them finish the badly-hurt ponies, but bring the Monk's wounded back with us!"

Loril repeated the orders. A runner now plucked at his sleeve. Something in the runner's face made Tom Steepe want to know his message at once. He heard the gasping voice, but the language was strange to him. Loril turned to Tom, interpreting in an awed tone:

"He says it was a woman, not a white *man*, riding with the Monk! He says it is *our* woman—and that *our* sea-faring man is there, too, walking far behind."

### III

#### A NIGHT'S WORK ALONE

THE runners came in one after another, telling different angles of the great thing he had done, but Tom Steepe only bowed his head. . . . Haggard's dead and wounded were many, they said—a hundred at least, left behind, and many pack animals. The Monk himself was now trying hard to check the rout of his followers, but it was with great difficulty they were brought to stand, many still running as if to reach the camp in the dry jungle again. Loril interpreted these affairs in quiet voice, but knew the other did not hear. He saw the white man's hand reach out to grasp and close upon three or four slim canes of green bamboo by the side of the trail.

"Find out if she's hurt," he muttered several times.

Tom had taken off his helmet. His body looked limp and sagging as if he had been beaten on the head.

Down by the shore last night, after fighting all day with the dirty suspicion that Lone Anstey was running away, he had managed to cleanse himself after a fashion. Now she was riding with the Monk! The evil thought hammered at every door of his being, but this time did not gain entrance.

"She stumbled on the Monk's camp in the dark," he whispered to himself. "Hear me—by accident, in the dark, on the way to Tanalao!"

He seemed impressing it upon himself.

The far sounds of Haggard's retreat were still in the air.

"The sun is dangerous in the open path," Loril warned, touching the helmet in the other's hand.

Tom cleared his voice, but the words didn't come just yet. His face turned into the dense green. He wanted to follow the Monk's rout, but it was only to follow Lone Anstey. He couldn't use Scarbaran's soldiers for personal reasons. He started huskily and turned to Loril saying:

"Give them the word. We're turning back to Kalilorei."

Back in his quarters in the stockade, Tom longed for night. Haggard's dead and wounded were cared for. Many valuable packs that had changed hands from the fallen ponies had been turned over to Scarbaran. It was hard for Tom to keep sane and think with slow effective clearness, when every little while the plight of the woman stormed his faculties. That isolated rifle shot almost wrung a cry from him when it came to mind. Lone Anstey might have been directly in front of him on the trail had the volley been held a moment longer. He would have stepped out possibly to capture the Monk and found her there!

This thought almost uncentred his reason at first. A thousand times he repeated that she had been captured—against the hint of a lawless thought that she had gone to the Monk of her own accord. . . . Word came in the afternoon that Haggard was on the march again, moving around to reach Kalilorei by the dry hill roads, his force apparently in hand once more.

Tom changed his mind about answering the Monk's placard with one of its own kind. Ordinarily, he might have played that game with a sort of grim joy. But all life seemed to go out of him at the thought of Haggard's prisoner. Even his aggressiveness as a leader against Haggard was spoiled by thought of Lone Anstey being hurt.

Tom was thinking out a better way to answer the Monk's placard. Haggard might be alert and keen and suspicious, but he could not suppress the activities of Scarbaran's spies—invisible eyes and fingers at work in his own ranks. There was doubtless some boy or man who would undertake to get to Haggard straight; even to give his own life to destroy the mind and hand now proving so formidable against the tribe. Tom wondered that old Scarbaran had not thought it out—to send one of the spies straight to kill the Monk.

Haggard's lines appeared on the hills back of the city in mid-afternoon. Kalilorei was now cut off from the north and west of the Island. A vast quantity of

stores was carried from the outer buildings of the city to comparative safety within the stockade. Tom watched for attack, but none came. In the last daylight, he walked along the outermost rim of his defence, staring across the hills as if for some sign of the woman, staring until the dusk thickened before his eyes.

The idea of employing one of Scarbaran's men to kill Haggard hadn't worn well, throughout the hours of afternoon. A feeling had risen in him against using one of his little Islanders that way. He stood a moment in the soft salty wind. He never could drink enough of this. The few weeks in the jungle had made him thirst deep for the sea. He wanted to hear it pound again like last night. Now he knew why he liked the sea more than ever—because he had been lifted up out of the water into a green light to see her face!

Tom flicked away a cigarette. He had been smoking all day; craving the more because he was dragged and tired within. Besides, the racket and gunpowder had brought back the old nervous need. A dozen times he felt a pull toward the little brown-papered cigarettes, faded black inside, which the Tagals used to bring him. He had once liked those "dobies," as Perry Chase called them, better than Turkish or Virginia leaf, but there was a soiled reek upon his tongue now, and fever deep inside. He didn't want food, but he wanted a swim—a deep water swim.



He laughed out loud to think of being caught far out in the harbour in case Haggard attacked.

His thoughts ran on:

No, he wouldn't ask one of Scarbaran's little chaps to go over and kill the Monk. He wouldn't have cared to tell *her*, had he put it through. Some time, would he tell her everything? This seemed an almost miracle to the lone maverick of the Islands, whom men had learned to let alone; and yet it should work out like that, for a man and woman, he reflected seriously.

He couldn't forget, however, that the whole difficulty just now was contained in Haggard's head. To break that head meant the grand first step up and out of Scarbaran's trouble. . . . Perhaps what he couldn't ask another to do he might do himself. This idea had been in the back of his mind for some time. Now it gripped him. The spies would tell him exactly where Haggard had chosen to place his headquarters to-night, and where they had made her place. A night's work alone——

It was one of those things done the moment it matured in his active consciousness. Tom moved for an hour among his men. His eyes smarted at the faith they gave him; something past words to Tom Steepe who had never really been trusted before. He hurried back to quarters at last. Loril tried to detain him with lure of food prepared.

"Not now—not just yet," Tom answered. "I'm taking a handful of clean clothes down to the shore



and risking a little wallow at the edge, though I'd like to get out in open water—deep as that treasure of yours!" he added in a whisper. "Oh, I'd like to get about a billion tons of brine on top of me and come up clean."

Soon after supper spies reported Haggard's personal position for the night to be close to the main inland road that ran over the hills to the Mirlapani. He was reported to be in a tent hard-by the front, but thinly padded from Kalilorei by his own lines. It was believed, but not positively stated, that the woman occupied an adjacent tent. Tom lay on his bunk for some time in silence, considering—still early evening.

## IV

### THE GAME-BIRD

**H**E must have slept an hour or more. His eyes opened with a start to the moonlight that whitened the opening. In the doorway, he saw the risen full moon. Twenty feet away on either side a sentry stood. Loril had posted them there, so that his sleep would not be disturbed. The miseries of the day creaked back into his mind, like heavily-freighted cars rolling on to a bridge and coming to full stop. . . . And she was little more than a mile away at this moment—in a tent of her own.

Tom buckled on a modern pistol and a native sheath-knife—a queer slim affair half as long as the Tagal *machetes*. He slipped forth in quiet haste, hoping to avoid explanation even to Loril. Here and there through the darker lanes of the city the little soldiers arose to attention and salute as the white man passed down toward the sea. The hills to the north were empty and he might have reached Haggard's lines, even the inner lines, more quickly, moving around the land way, but Tom fancied following the shore as long as he could. Leaving no orders, he vanished

beyond the last of Scarbaran's beach outposts, into the dense darkness of the strand, the cliffs to the left as yet cutting off the light of the moon.

The stake was big, though the chance was long. It was a gamble to-night. He breathed deep to find himself free, and laughed when a wave stole up in the dark and drenched him to the ankles. The old sea always did that as he walked along the shore. She would wait until he forgot, and then send a wave higher than the rest.

He peered through the dark at the contours of the cliff. It was many minutes and he was well in Haggard's lines when he found a path and began to climb. Half-way, he heard the scratch of a match upon its box, straight above—a native sentry posted at the top, doubtless. Tom left the path to follow a rather precarious shelving on the cliff and came to the upper edge at length in a heavy thicket, forty or fifty feet beyond the lone sentry who had scratched the match. He carefully marked the place where that sentry stood, as one who might need it again. For the most part the hills were covered with dwarfed, squatty trees resembling stunted live-oaks, with stiff twisted and dusty branches. Tom moved cautiously across the hills until finally, after an hour's hard work, the smell of a man-camp came to his nostrils, so recently cleansed by the salty air.

He found a position at length above the road to the Mirlapani, and lay very still on the stony slope,

trying to get the locale and especially Haggard's personal position straight. It was now one in the morning. All camp-fires were out below; all but the sentries asleep. There seemed nothing to tell by the movements of the sentries; they merely moved back and forth on the road below. At length, as he stared through the moonlight to the left, he saw the faintest possible outline of the stockade of Kalilorei on its hill in the distance. He was nearer to the extreme front of Haggard's position than he had thought.

"His tent must be back to the right, according to what the spies said," he muttered, moving that way.

A pebble loosed and rolled down into the road, as he made his way along the slope. A sentry below sniffed like a puppy. Tom wondered if the native would make the same noise again, if another pebble dropped. He found that the Monk's main body of soldiers was bunched; that there had been no effort on their part to surround Kalilorei so far. He was not finding his reconnoitre exciting to this point. The hilltops with their parched little trees of stiff, dusty foliage furnished a comparatively safe runway back to the edge of the bluffs if he could avoid the sentries. Certainly the Monk had no startlingly new order or design in the conduct of a camp to make inspection profitable. Tom became more fixed in his conviction that the Monk was a "rotten" soldier.

He was still making his way to the right along the slope and at last, incredibly vague, of the very tex-

ture of the moonlight at the distance, Tom saw two tents in the open. This was according to the word of the spies exactly. One tent was the Monk's; one was Lone Anstey's. A single candle burned in the nearer. A sentry walked past between them.

"This Haggard's delicate about being assassinated," Tom muttered, noting the clearing. "No innocent landscape gardener ever chose that site to pitch a tent or two. . . . And which is his tent?" . . . Yes, Tom cared to know if the candle burned in the Monk's tent—or in the woman's. He took a further chance and closed in toward the clearing where the tents were. The moonlight was sultry. Part of the stuffiness was from the coating of dust upon every twig and leaf, but there was no denial that the sudden drenching of perspiration had to do with the tents in the moonlight.

. . . With fifty men he might charge the tents and get the woman, possibly the Monk, too. It would be a rush and away, for the Monk's whole twenty-five hundred would be upon them within three minutes, hunting them through the tightly-screened hills.

There were objections back in his mind, answering like a parent to the mad plans of a child. If it were only to get the Monk, he might risk it alone now, but the tents—which was which? Moreover, Tom found himself crippled in another way. It wasn't in him to rush into a man's tent and murder him in his cot. He might even have carried out an order to this effect

issued by another man, but he couldn't carry out his own.

At last as he lay back cramped against the steep, stony slope, Tom saw the candle in the nearer tent darken and flame again. It had been covered for a second. Some one inside had passed between it and his eyes. The flap of the tent now parted; a form emerged and stood there a second or two in the moonlight—a slim figure, robed full-length, head bare but bowed, hands held behind, like an old print seen somewhere of Daniel in the den of lions.

And now the figure walked to the other tent. The violence of anger did not drive Tom's body into action. Something canny, even devilish, far back in his consciousness, held him still with the thought that it is a crude thing to *thrust* rescue upon a woman! The Monk paused before the other tent. Tom did not hear his voice, but heard the voice of the woman within—just a sentence. He would not have known the woman to be Lone Anstey by the tone that reached him.

He never watched anything before as he watched that figure at the flap of the far tent. His still eyes stormed it, every spring of his being coiled tight. The Monk's bare head was inclined close to the canvas as if to listen. It lifted and bowed coldly. His words were spoken too softly to carry far. The woman's tones in answer—only a sentence again—were glacial but her words also lost form in the distance.

Tom Steepe heard for the first time the laugh of Haggard, the Monk, whose face looked very white in the moonlit distance. A face uplifted and that laugh from somewhere! Then the Monk spoke a sentence more loudly—about a garden with a wall—and walked slowly back to his own tent.

Something loosed in Tom's body. It was as if he had been riveted for many minutes to the stone slope. He sat up now, and two or three small stones slid out from under. Haggard, standing in front of his tent, turned and faced the sound. A sentry below on the road came to full stop. Tom sat still and glared, a mocking smile upon his white mouth.

No order was given. Haggard retired. The sentry resumed his pacing. A little after that Tom Steepe started back for Kalilorei, climbed the slope again and entered the thickets. He could not keep his mind upon the proper care and precaution of stealth. He was hearing again and again that tone from the woman's throat—the polar fury of it. It was so utterly unlike Lone Anstey as to be difficult to contemplate. It would finish him, if she ever turned a tone like that his way.

He had been pushing hard through the thickets, stiff, dry little branches that took a lot of pushing to shove aside. They closed with a snap. A native voice sang out ahead of him and was answered from behind. It was like the first and second cries of a wolf pack—the traveller caught between. Tom came to a sudden



halt in the tangle—his own fault. Now he heard other calls ahead and behind—a challenge near by and running feet. He held low and still.

Twenty feet away he saw the bare head of a native soldier, a boy with shocky black hair; then the gleam of the long Krag barrel occasionally showing at the side of the head. The moonlight made everything queer. The boy had seen him and was coming closer, frightened, but eager, too. He had only to pass one more dwarfed tree. Tom didn't move. The boy halted, his eyes riveted, as if Tom's figure had been a great game-bird in the shadow. Tom suddenly lifted his pistol until the moon shone upon it, holding the barrel down. Then he tucked it back into his holster, as he stood up.

*"Go back,"* he whispered intensely, *"and keep very still!"*

Apparently the boy understood in part. He obeyed in a bewildered way, possibly thinking that this was his chief. Tom turned and continued his way. He had gone fully fifty feet, before the young sentry thought better of his orders and began to yell the alarm.

A race after that. Rifles flashed at the game-bird from many angles. No bullet touched him. Once Tom fired, but he aimed low and with a laugh at the fumbling sentry who stood between him and the sea. The obstruction dropped and Tom darted on, zigzagging among the bushes. Haggard's little wolves gathered



in numbers and yelped to heaven from the dusty thickets, but the white man, on his knees part of the time, sometimes breaking through stiff thorn and bramble, made his way—a scarey flight across the hills.

Six or seven cartridges left in the pistol, when he saw the figures of three natives silhouetted against the horizon from the edge of the bluff where the path went down. Only one had stood there when he came. Thirty or forty feet of open area stretched between them and the last thicket, from which shelter Tom now plunged forward with a yell, shooting as he ran.

Their rifles were not levelled. They seemed to disappear until he passed; then the shots hammered. He was hit in the cheek. A bullet tore between his ribs and arm, but his strength was not in the least abated, the laugh not yet passed from his lips.

At the turn of the path down to the water's edge, he saw a fire below upon the sand. Three natives waited there, guns held forward. Tom leaped over-side from the path, instead of running down the last fifteen or twenty feet. He landed in the sand close to the fire, and scrambled rapidly out of the firelight, turning two shots upon the three. The automatic pulled dry in his hand and Tom flung the little piece into the face of the nearest, as he ran along the water's edge.

Now he saw another bonfire ahead on the shore, and other figures running toward him from the direction

of Kalilorei. The slim knife was in his hand, but they would certainly cut him off; at least, this present complication looked worse than any so far. Just then the cold water of a soft stealing wave touched his foot.

That wave had a message for him.

He plunged in, darting like a seal under the low tumble of the first surf-line, the queer thudding drum of the rifle crashes in his ears even under water. He marvelled to himself, and not for the first time, how hard he was to kill. Now the sand left from beneath and the white of the breaking water was behind. Savage joy came into him as he caught the swell and the rhythm of the ocean. He took a long breath presently, and let himself go down, unbuckling holster and knife-sheath under water, letting them slip from him. He smelled the blood upon his cheek in the wash of the brine as he came up to blow. He felt the burn under his sleeve.

"Just a graze," he muttered.

The natives did not follow, but afar out in deep water Tom still heard an occasional rifle crack, and laughed to think of the wide eyes and open mouth of that native boy who came to a point before his game-bird in the shadows.

"The little beggar really did obey me for a minute," he chuckled.

Now Tom thought of the two tents as he swam—of the ashen light and the figure, not the sentry, who

walked between. Then it was as if her voice reached him again from within the farther tent—the tone still striking him cold.

“No, I don’t need any of that!” he muttered, swimming faster.



**PART SEVEN**

**ZERO**



## I

### LONE ANSTEY SPEAKS

**T**O Lone Anstey after the volley, all had become utterly confused and horrible. Bos'n trudged beside her leading his pony, his beamlike shoulders bent forward to the ground. She only knew they were going back the way they had come. She had not even realised so far that it was Tom Steepe's men who had routed Haggard's lines. There was no particular meaning to the crash of rifles still in the air, nor the occasional bullet that roared past her face. She was looking into a world of men as few women have looked before—a world of cruelty, utterly bleak to her. Men never told these things; at least, they told them only as *they* saw them. She heard Haggard's voice from farther and farther ahead.

There was one wounded native boy whom she could not pass by like the rest. Bos'n brought water. A barefoot native boy shot in the throat and only a few minutes to stay. It was all so personal! All the lad's little earth interests had closed; even the fact that he had been fighting for a strange priest was forgotten. There was no stanching the flow of blood. Nothing

that she had with her proved enough. His face whitened, shrunk almost visibly before her. The more she gave herself, the more involved she became to thrust back his enveloping shadows. Yet the boy was at peace. His eyes followed her; whitening lips that held a smile for her alone. It was so easy to him—easy to come, easy to go. And she had been utterly lost in the fret and complication and fever of life that pitied and dared to patronise his little scope.

His hand reached slowly out and caught her forefinger, holding it lightly at the joint. She felt the weight of his hand and arm, but his fingers rested lightly upon hers. And now his eyes lost her, his face turning away to the sun. He seemed to nestle a little, his shoulder relaxing upon the ground. It was all as if he had dropped down under a tree on a summer's day—save that the eyes so unblinkingly held the sun. . . . She was hurrying on, the Bos'n beside her. Often she looked back. It had all been contrived so softly. It tore her out of herself.

Haggard, as she had seen him in the hollow at the first fire, had thus been seen by no one else. The priest had become a soldier, indeed. There was a rake to his shoulders when she came up with him again, and a smile of conquest on the face she had seen in its hideous torment of fear. She could not put away from mind, however, how he had mastered his fears and arisen to check the rout of his men. They had paused in the hills near Kalilorei in the early afternoon, the army integrated



again. He wanted to talk of the new pleasure he had found in himself.

"The idea of being fired upon just then was never farther from my mind," he said. "I was shocked. I cannot tell you how horrible it was to me—that first bullet so near my face. It seemed as big as a hammer and utterly malignant. Yet there was no fear! Falling from the mount, I knew it. Stopping my ears against the sounds, the dirty water of the trail running into the cloth upon my shoulders, the smell of the ground in my nostrils—I knew there was no fear! But it is one thing to know, and another to do. It was like lifting a world! It *was* lifting my world to get upon my knees, to face you calmly, to speak, to rise in the storm of that first volley. Yet it was done, and I am glad. It will be easy again."

"Then you have never heard a bullet coming your way before?" she asked curiously.

"I never heard a bullet coming or going," he answered with eagerness.

It was not until dusk that she smelled the sea. The softest possible breeze came in as the sun went down, and she emerged from her tent by the side of the road. Haggard had been away for two hours and she had been trying to find herself again. They had pitched his tent nearer than the tent of yesterday. It brought up the old anger—so worse than useless now.

Lone Anstey felt very old; as if she would be tired

many days, even if she could begin to rest now. She could see the native city on the hills ahead—the great stockade upon the central hill. She had never felt her own insignificance as during this afternoon, in the hours since she had left the boy upon the trail.

When Haggard joined her, speaking of supper, her mind revolted against the great pile of crystal which had borne down the little table last night. Her eyes still stung from the candle gleams imbedded in that glass; but to-night, a little red cloth such as one might find in a fisherman's cabin.

"Does it have an inviting look to you?" he asked, as they entered. "It isn't dinner to-night, just tea."

Warm scent of muffins from under the napkins. He laughed when he saw her eyes held to a jar of Scotch jam.

"That caused it all," he said quietly. "Lame Crook brought in that jar asking if it wasn't a kind of saddle dressing. The whole picture of our supper, even the red tablecloth, came to me from the label of that jam-pot, only we should have an oil lamp instead of candles. There's canned butter from Denmark, but butter does not carry age like wine. The cheese is better, and tea——"

He lifted the cover of a big cane basket and showed her the tea-pot nestled in thicknesses of felt. He seemed quite joyously intent upon carrying out his picture. She wondered for a moment if there were not something sullen in her heart that there was no answer.

. . . Her thoughts roamed away to the dying boy—the soul of a boy on the wet trail to-day. She dwelt in the mystery of his passing.

“ . . . It was clever of him,” Haggard was saying of Tom Steepe. “Rothatcher said he was an Island man; said he was apt to prove a leader of Islanders. Clever of him, but I think somehow he’ll have to reckon with me for that little piece of work down in the bottom-lands this morning.”

He was watching her intently. She did not speak.

“Somehow I think we’ll take him over. I told the men to-day that I want him alive; that he’s worth more to me alive than dead. I want to look at him—to look into him!”

“To find Tanalao’s secret?”

He laughed and reached quickly across the table, covering her hand in his.

“We’ll learn that secret together.”

She held still, wondering that her hatred did not freeze him.

“I’ve tortured enough about that for the present. I was brooding upon it this morning in the bottom-lands when your friend taught me that lesson.”

Her hatred did not freeze him; it was rather the other way. To withdraw her hand would have required actual effort which she hesitated to use.

“The secret will come in its own order, when we are really together,” he added. “The secret, the Island,

then one after another the golden days—when we are really together!”

There was a second or two of deepest silence and Lone Anstey found her laugh again—cooling, healing, deep within, the laugh that transcended anger and fear.

“Your picture is so clear and yet you fail to see that it is not my picture,” she said steadily. “All that you see, I see differently. The woman who belonged with you would thrill at your words, at your suppers and dinners and thoughts—even at the way you manage yourself.”

Her hand was now free. It had been so easily released when she found her own inner strength.

“Manage myself?” he repeated, drawing his head back to study her from a different angle.

“This morning I thought you were a coward, a coward the way the world means,” she said concisely. “I saw you fight yourself out of pitiful cowardice. It is quite true you did well. You have learned to do many things well. One might be interested as a spectator, but I am tired of that. I am tired of you. I am so tired, that I have no hope ever of telling it. There are no words—hideously, irrevocably tired!”

“The days have been too hard for you!”

“The days are nothing. It is from you—my weariness! The dead, the wounded, the firing of the volley this morning, are only part of the ghastly confusion around *you*! I hardly recall outside things. It is you who tire me. All that you say, all that the Gray

Brothers taught you, all the smooth, clicking processes of your thoughts—they tire me utterly! I am being destroyed in them. I have known no rest since I heard your voice, only deeper and deeper *fatigue*, until this moment, as I try to tell you a little part—how tired I am!”

The Monk arose, glanced hastily at the flap of the tent and moved to her chair and knelt there.

“I do not take your words,” he said. “The battle has wearied you, the strangeness, the blur and confusion of our work just now. You have seen blood upon the ground. No, do not think that I accept your words, for they would come back if I did—to haunt you another time. The devil is in your mind, because you are worn out.”

She put his hands from her, holding her own upon his shoulders firmly, and she looked down.

“Do not spare me in your thoughts,” she said, with strange patience. “I must not let you spare me this way. Hear me all. You are disease to me—devouring disease—*dis-ease*. Understand me clearly: You have lost your way; there is that about you which devours. Your presence, and not the war, not the blood upon the ground, not the outer violence, devours. Know it now and forever, there is something gone from you that craves and craves and reaches out to take something from all who pass. Being close to you has shown me the deepest secret of the word *exhaustion*.”

## II

### THE WALLED GARDEN

**H**AGGARD, grey-faced, arose slowly from his knees.

“Don’t talk that way. Don’t talk any more, little girl. You must not want to be at war with me. Hear me now, hear the man who has offered you wealth and power and himself. I have offered you more—you, a strange woman—to play the game eye to eye and hand in hand with me—and you dare to forget that this is a man’s world yet!”

The colour came back to his face. She had in no wise overpowered him. She was close to crying out now that her words, so horrible to herself, had not levelled him. There was one ringing reverberating sentence from him, “. . . and you dare to forget that this is a man’s world yet!” Something that suffocated in just that—something before which even her inmost spiritual force quailed. It seemed to touch a secret war, not only in herself, but in the hearts of all women.

“I shall tell *you* some things,” he said softly. “You are no good to me, unless you give yourself. It’s only a matter of poetic license—that a woman can be any

joy to a man if she does not willingly give herself. Enough of that. I have looked upon you and found you good. I have not asked what you have been, nor why a woman moves in the night from camp to camp. Another time for that. This much for now: that you have come to me. I have accepted you, as I have accepted Tanalao. I do not mind you wild at first—it is the vitality of the young lioness—misdirected. Having come to me, you shall never go to another. Already I have breathed myself in your presence—lifted the veil from my vision. You can deny yourself from me, because I cannot have you against your volition, but you cannot leave my place to go your way.

“You have watched two days of this life. You shall find my star rising in a bigger orbit than other men’s. They rise and fall back; rise, struggle, appear a moment above the murk, fall back. I rise and continue to rise. Now that you have come to me, you shall rise with me or wait behind—in my shadow! Here, or in Kalilorei, on board our own steamer, in our citadel in the Andes or in the southern mountains of our little Island, we shall be together, and each day I shall call upon you to see how you fare, and wait for you to become wise. And you will not be the only woman in this man’s world waiting like this in her own place, her own walled garden—waiting to grow the flowers of wisdom.

“You have listened well,” he finished, in the same quiet tone. “It has helped me to forget that you have spoken. There is now real work to do—work about Kalilorei—



work to plan the taking of our little fortress yonder on its hill. I had hoped to work with you to-night, here in the candle-light. A light supper, I thought—then the planning together, the play of man and woman mind together—one of the fine strategic games! . . . But I can wait. Go to your tent now and think. It shall be as if you had never spoken, if you think wisely. And to-night I shall come to you——”

“You shall—what?”

“To-night, later, I shall come to you for your decision. It may be hours. Now, in the meantime, I must do that which I had hoped we might do together.”

She had hurried forth without speaking. There was a kind of half-warning that it would have been better to answer now, but the escape from his presence was too dear. His ordered expression crippled her own mind force. She lay in the dark for hours, knowing that she must not waste herself in rage, knowing that the whitest, most righteous anger did not touch him. In the sickness of fatigue she at last fell asleep, holding her temples as if they would fly apart like an erupted globe.

She heard his voice from a great distance. It was not strange to her. It was like a voice which had tortured her for ages, for aeons. This that she heard now from a distance was the same she had just been hearing



in the depths of sleep. He was standing outside her tent-flap.

She smelled jasmine, not the flowers, but the oil, as from a garment stained the day before. She would hate it from that instant for the rest of her life.

"I have come for you," Haggard said softly.

She did not answer.

"I have come," he repeated. "I have done your work and mine. Are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Are you wiser? Have you seen the light?"

"You are vacant and utterly black to me!" she answered.

Haggard laughed aloud.

"I shall see to it soon—your garden, the walled garden—where only the gardener himself shall have the key. He shall come each day to watch the little flowers of wisdom coming on!"

"Each day he shall see how his presence withers all life!"

It was the tone of her voice now that Tom Steepe heard, as he lay watching, up on the slope.

### III

#### "LONE ANSTEY, IT IS I!"

**L**YING awake after the Monk left, the shots began above the road. Long afterward Lone Anstey heard the blur of voices as the reports were brought to the next tent. No actual truth of what had happened reached her, and the night wore on. Breakfast was served in her own quarters and luncheon, too. There appeared no sign of Haggard taking the aggressive in a military way that day. She heard his voice occasionally talking from the other tent, the voice of one lifted from a book or a task. She spent the afternoon alone, except for a call from the Bos'n, who mourned with her for a few minutes and went away. Late in the afternoon, the bent one brought a request for her to come to the other tent for dinner in an hour. . . . Haggard seemed absorbed. He served her with care, but spoke little until near the end:

"You haven't heard that we had a call from your young friend last night?"

"My friend?"

"The white man from Kalilorei."

"I had not heard."

"I have been rather expecting to pay that reward to-day, though I'd much prefer him delivered alive. Half our army has been down upon the shore all day, eyes intent upon the sea."

Though he talked with torturing leisureliness, she did not urge him to hasten.

"The body hasn't washed up," he went on carefully. "I've heard of strong swimmers, but my men estimate that up on the hills, on the path down, on the shore itself and including the time required for him to get out of range in the surf, 'the Island man' took from twelve to fifteen Krag bullets into his person."

He didn't watch her steadily now, just a curious roving sideways glance as of a carrion bird winging slowly by. It was like that to her—the look that waits for one to die.

"I am taking into consideration the saying that it often takes a man's weight in steel to kill him. Yet much of the firing was at very close range. There were short stretches of open in which many of my soldiers fired. At the bottom of the little path from the bluffs to the shore he leaped overside the last twenty feet, landing in one of our sentry-fires. The rifles were turned upon him from little more than their own length."

He paused to fill her goblet of water, and then lit one of his lengthy cigarettes from the red Russian box.

"There was a quaint incident just at that point—the point where he leaped into the sentry-fire on the shore. His automatic pistol was empty and after pumping it

on dead metal once or twice our young man flung it into the breast of the nearest soldier, who brought it to me for a souvenir. Then he plunged into the sea, under fire. The natives say that the big scavengers play off-shore just a little way beyond the surf lines. Not man-eaters; that is, only an occasional grey nurse will attack a living man."

Lone Anstey had arisen. Haggard did not appear to see.

"There is another possible explanation why the body——"

Now his eyes came up to hers and he arose hastily, saying:

"Why, you're ill!"

There was a pitiful sound from her throat, not like words. Her shoulders bowed forward as she hurried out and across the little space between the tents. Her hands lifted to her temples as she entered.

She *had* heard the shots the night before. This was the main point of the awful tallying in her mind. She might have taken some ease to live with in the thought that Haggard had lied to torture her, but something *had* happened the night before.

She faced it after hours. The world in its wild unreason was very close and very cold. In all the twenty years since she could remember, her heart had told her, in spite of what her eyes looked upon outside, that all would be well—if love came. Love had come and gone

almost in a day. At least love's relation to this life was done. Life was already to her as others had found it, a pain, a grief.

Once she had heard a maidservant tell another of how her lover had been killed. Lone Anstey had heard that story but not understood; nothing like that could happen to her. . . . It did not seem now that Tom Steepe could be hunted like a hare among the bushes in the moonlight and riddled with bullets. But she had heard shots! It was actually true that the sharks came in close to the Island and were often seen between the second and third lines of surf. . . . Hunted and harried like a hare and then fed to the deep sea scavengers—the body of her lover!

Every faculty of her consciousness had been bent to the breaking point to face this. She wondered if she were still sane. She dwelt in a great coldness. All days behind her were little days; all she had known in the past of emotions were at best hotly human. This was zero. Her body seemed breaking, the heart of flesh breaking, but, deeper within, it was as if her spirit began softly to sing after ages.

She stood alone in the dark. . . . He had come to her across the lines last night—a daring, boyish thing. She sensed something dear in him now, not touched before. He had tried to come close to her in the night. . . . But he seemed near now! In a way he was nearer than ever before. Something from the Island man was

with her now—something splendid, untwisted, without mockery. . . .

A whisper was in the air, like a whisper from a different world.

“Lone Anstey!”

It was of the utmost softness. It seemed to breathe up from the ground.

“Lone Anstey!”

She moved to the tent opening, wondering if she had passed for a moment to some new meeting-place in no-man's-land, where *he* had been permitted to tarry for a moment after his passing, to call her name.

“Lone Anstey, it is I! Lone Anstey, open. It is I, Tom Steepe!”

The canvas parted. Moonlight and earth again. He seemed carven of black upon the ground, but his hand came up and touched her knee. She bent and took it in both of hers. His hand was warm and strong. He came in through the flap, half upon the ground, awkward because he did not take his hand from her to help himself. Now he was upon his knees before her, laughing, holding her body fast. She touched his lips, his cheeks, his moist forehead. Living warmth of him came up to her senses, like a runner fallen at her feet after his race. She knelt beside him and took his face to her breast whispering, whispering.

PART EIGHT  
THE LONE WAR





## I

### A MOMENT TOGETHER

**T**OM had floated on his back to rest a little, when he reached at last the still moonlit waters of the inner harbour, within his own lines again. He began to get the different landmarks upon the Kalilorei shore. The stiff cross currents had made it hard for him to come in. He blew and panted softly now.

A sliding cut in the waters behind, as if an oar had softly been feathered—the sidewise glide of a fin breaking the surface. Tom started swimming again. Always a whole lot of talk about sharks, but here and there in his experience there was reason; now and then a lanky grey one came up under a man and showed white. . . . Tom didn't float again, nor did he relax until he reached white waters on the shore and his feet touched sand.

No difficulty after the first sentry was passed upon the shore. For a minute that one had been hard to convince. Many of Scarbaran's men and boys followed him quietly now up through the city. Loril joined him half-way to the stockade. Three in the morning, when Tom put off his wet garments and sank back upon his

pallet with a long breath that was half a groan. They brought many lights to dress his wounds—far too painstakingly to suit the white man, who counted the hurts trivial at a glance.

Two servants came in with trays, one of Loril's sisters following to see that all was well. There was a steaming white cloth—unpinned, unrolled, unwound. It seemed interminable. Often the brown fingers stopped and were blown because of the heat of those white folds. Once uncovered, they served the feast swiftly—a wonderful filet of halibut, flaking apart, and a red-gold sauce, so dry and teasing that Tom forgot himself in a sort of chase.

Only Loril tarried.

"I knew you would fear for me, if I started off with you knowing about it," Tom said drowsily. "It looked as if I sneaked off, but it was worth while. Waken me at any sign of movement from the Monk; otherwise put those sentries back at the door, and hang a curtain so I can sleep till—till. . . . Thanks, Loril, good night."

. . . He thought small creatures were pulling at him. It was all very dim—a submarine light. It began to straighten out that he was under water; small fishes coming in and out through an unearthly green. These were pulling at him, little mouths that pulled hard as they drew away, taking bits of his shoulder and arm.

He came up with a gasp, a queer gladness about it all, to smell the dry air again and see the brilliant light through the chinks of the bamboo curtain at the door.

Stiffened bandages had formed the clue to the dream. He had been lying rather heavily upon the sore place between his arm and ribs. It was good to feel the dry warmth flowing back into his body. The burn and the stiffness were as nothing, when he began to realise. Contemplating the last moments of the night before, he had not known how tired he was then; actually a bit off his head, he must have been.

Larger episodes of the night returned; the long ramble before he found his place on the slope to look down at the two tents; the Monk passing from one to the other; her voice that needed no words, a voice that he seemed to have heard ages ago in an hour of a great failure. If she should speak to him in that tone, there wouldn't be depths in the sea for him to hide.

It was post noon. Tom had sunk into a stupor nine hours long. That afternoon he walked among the outposts. His soldiers were trenching the roads that faced Haggard's position. He went over with Loril certain details of his plan for defence. They were not to hold these outer positions as a matter of life and death, but merely to inflict as much punishment as possible on the Monk as he came; not to risk hand-to-hand work, but to fall back from one defence to another as the enemy's aggressive became intense. Haggard could have the lower town, but he'd have to fight for it street by street. Moreover, he would be forced to take a lot of punishment in the open, before Scarbaran's soldiers retired for more leisurely defence within the stockade.

Tom's night adventure and the successful ambush of yesterday had filled Kalilorei with satisfaction and self-reliance.

All day Tom knew he would make another reconnoitre this night within the Monk's lines. A hundred times he put it away, yet he knew the night would call him to look down on those tents again. At nightfall he stared over the heavy pickets of the stockade toward Haggard's position with something of the passion that a full-blooded young countryman looks toward the livening lights of a distant city. Yonder over the hills by the Mirlapani road, two tents, side by side, held his hell and his heaven. He was drawn toward them now with all the fierceness of his heart. Loril sensed he was going again, and showed his sorrow.

"There's a cloud now and then on the moon to-night," Tom said soothingly. "Last night it was all wide open, staring like day. Something may happen to-night to save a hundred lives—one turn of one man's hand. There's no telling what one man can do, carrying the fight a little ahead of schedule. Our old Bos'n is over there. Our woman is over there. It might just happen to-night—the whole thing might happen!"

Loril wanted to go with him.

Tom laughed, as he shook his head.

"One thing is certain, I'm for you! I may not come back alone, but I'll come back! I leave a little earlier to-night. I'm going the other way around this time."

Before midnight Tom reached a position on the op-

posite side of the tents from the place on the slope he had occupied the night before. This time Lone Anstey's tent was the nearer. The waiting seemed long as his first day in prison, before the moonlight was darkened and the sentry was held at the far end of his position at the same time, but at last at the right moment he descended and went to the flap of her tent, calling softly. . . . This was the most terrible period of life to Lone Anstey—her hours alone after Haggard had told her of Tom Steepe's coming the night before—of the shots and the sharks. Then the moment came to her that he seemed *near*—even if he had passed to the other side.

Tom Steepe arose and lifted her to her feet, still holding.

"I had to come, Lone Anstey," he whispered. "I had to let you know they didn't get me last night!"

". . . But here, you are in his—noose!"

Her hands had found the bandage under his arm and the stiff plaster upon his cheek.

"They told me—" she gasped, "they told me you had taken to the ocean like a hunted creature—to die out of reach!"

"Don't you ever be frightened, Lone Anstey. I always get away."

"Softly, softly—the sentry comes near!"

"And then I've got to have a little conference with Haggard to-night."

"You—mean—you—would—go—to—his—tent?"

"I won't kill him from behind. I want him to look up and find me in there with him. We'll know what to do then. We'll do it quick and quiet."

Her hands loosened from him. She could not speak.

"Of course, you know," he added, "he's the whole works just now. He's everything that we have got to fear or fight against. His army is nothing with him out of the way."

"You wouldn't kill him from behind!" she repeated strangely.

"I told you that."

"But he would murder *you*! He would take any chance, work any foulness——"

She felt his hand close upon her wrist.

"Has he hurt you, Lone Anstey?"

"Being near him hurts——"

"Has he touched you with his hands, I mean?"

"No."

"If I could go in there and get him—get him straight—you and I could make a getaway to our lines to-night! Where's Bos'n?"

He could not see her face in the darkness, as she told him.

"We'll have to collect him, too, for the getaway."

"If you would only go away now, without going to Haggard's tent!"

"That wouldn't be good soldiering!"

"I was in a great cold light before you came," she

said vaguely, "A great lonely light. I think I'm too tired for more fighting!"

She led him to the pallet. Her hands placed him in the darkness where he was to sit. She sat down close, and her voice trailed on:

"If you should start alone back to your lines now, and I should hear shots again like last night—oh, don't you see, I couldn't stand it? I've come to the end!"

"It's our hour, Lone Anstey, the big gamble! We can't lose. It'll all be over in an hour."

"Softly, the sentry will hear us."

"Nothing can break your heart," he went on. "You're the gamest thing that ever stepped—Lone Anstey."

She put her hand across his lips. He heard the sentry's step again.

A moment later she told him how the Bos'n had insisted on accompanying her, and how they had become fouled in Haggard's lines at the end of the passage through the jungle. She showed him vaguely from the tent-opening where their friend, the Bos'n, was quartered now. She felt his hand tighten in his strength of feeling for the sea-faring one, but his face was turned away to Haggard's tent.

"It wouldn't do *not* to get the Monk to-night!" he repeated.

"But the bent one is there—I mean his Chinese servant—a shadow, a twisted shadow, like a separated part of the Monk himself!"

Now she knew a suffocating sense, as if some one were listening outside. No step and no shadow could be seen.

"What is it?" he whispered at last, but her hand closed only the more tightly upon his own.

"Be silent a minute—just silent together a minute, trying not to think!"

He thought of her—her nearness and dearness closing upon him in the silence. Her words came back, like those of a fevered girl telling how tired she was. She was close now, but no torture about it—like a little girl making a prayer—some immortal significance dawning upon his mind.

They heard a step. Tom thought it was the sentry returning, but it was different and came closer. Now they heard the scratch of a nail upon the canvas outside. Lone Anstey was pushing him back. He gave himself willingly to her hands, which pressed him down to the rugs on the far side of the couch.

The claw upon the cloth again. The flap was rustled softly. The whisper came:

"Hlo."

"Yes."

"General send for."

"For me?"

"Yes—now."

"But I cannot go——"

"General know more 'bout white man—dead-or-'live-white-man!"



Lone Anstey drew back, a vague hope in her mind of occupying Haggard herself and thus making opportunity for Tom Steepe to escape. The flap fell together again. She drew near the couch whispering:

"It's the way—the one way—for you to return now! You can cross to the thickets when the sentry is at the other end and I am in there. Oh, do this for me! Do this for the love we know!"

"Leave you—go back empty-handed? Leave you in his hands—in his tent—to-night?"

"If you think I can stand more—stay!" she whispered strangely. "If you are not afraid my mind or my heart will break, stay!"

"But think of the waiting hours and days! Think of what it means to me to go back alone to my lines! A chance like this may not come again—the chance to end it in a night—one man to end it all—to save all their lives! Why, Lone Anstey, I've got an idea. It's your kind of an idea—our kind. War ought to be fought this way—a hand to hand thing between two men who are running it!"

"Hush! The bent one is coming back!"

For an instant she leaned across the pallet, her face to his. "I know nothing now about war—how war should be fought," she whispered in vague and hopeless weariness. "I only know I cannot endure it to have you go there. You do not know him!"

"And yet you would go——"

"But I am safe enough. He will not murder me."

"Murder——"

"Oh, it's not what you think—you poor tortured boy! Our love is safe—but I am going—I shall be there if you go to him."

"Would you go if I weren't here, Lone Anstey?"

"No."

"And you're going now?"

"Yes. Oh, don't you see—I'll hold him—occupy him—hold the bent one there—to give you a chance to escape!"

"But I'm not running away!"

"Don't say it! Think of it for me; think how I suffer to save you—oh, for me——"

Her voice sank to a hardly vibrant whisper. He heard the Chinese at the opening again.

"Yes, I am coming," she said.

The bent one did not move this time from the flap of the tent.

## II

### HAGGARD STAMPS

**T**OM scarcely realised. He felt the fling of wind across his face, as she flung a robe over her shoulders. Then she was gone. Tom didn't mean to stay here, but he didn't hurry to follow Lone Anstey to Haggard's tent. . . . Lone Anstey asking him to turn back! He loved it in her; loved it as he loved her fortitude, and the mysterious austerities against which he had battled so pitilessly without understanding.

The hum of voices reached him. He was at the tent-opening when he heard the shuffling step of the bent one coming back. Perhaps now that the woman was with Haggard, the Chinese meant to look over her quarters. Perhaps their voices had been heard. The bent one was at the flap. Tom saw the moonlight at the opening, and a creeping dark hand; then the curve of the yellow man's spine that shut out half the world, as he softly entered. The white man had dropped back where Lone Anstey's hand had pressed him, behind the couch.

The bent one was feeling about in the dark, his hands poking into hangings, groping among the pillows. If

he expected to find a man, he was utterly nerveless in this performance. Now, with one knee upon the couch, the Chinese felt in his blouse for a box of matches, drew it forth with a shake and tapped it with his long nail before extricating a stick.

Tom waited in silence and felt the need, as never before, of preventing any outcry that would carry to the next tent. He sprang with the flash of the match that flared close to his face. The Chinese head was in the hollow of his arm before the first muffled cry was heard. Tom's right hand reached under, in further effort to stop the yellow throat. He had recklessly underestimated the strength of the body in his hands. A cutting of teeth through his sleeve that was pressed against the bent one's mouth angered him; the squirm and tearing strokes of the crooked creature drew a sudden surge of strength to his body, and the two whipped forward to the couch.

A moment there, black and desperate. Tom had forgotten the mercy that first weakened his hands. The yellow man's throat was thick and sinewy. As the seconds of struggle drew on, Tom forgot all else. . . . A lump came up under his relaxing fingers at last—the filling throat that mostly goes with death in bird and beast and man. The white man drew back shaken with organic revolt. The twisted body beneath him seemed whipping out. Then it was still and Tom stood drenched with sweat in the centre of the tent. He listened a full half-minute. At least, his chief concern for

silence seemed to have carried, but he was glad in a bitter fashion that she hadn't been near for this part. Two or three times in his life this thing had happened, this killing strength—and always when human teeth had touched his flesh. His impression was curiously complete that the Chinese was done for.

He held his face to the opening, at first thinking merely to breathe. The night was bright compared to the dark his eyes had known, yet the moon was covered and the sentry was out of sight beyond the next tent. The present moment was good as any. Still the hum of voices across the area—a drawling, and then as he darted forward, running low—her voice!

At the Monk's tent, the whim touched him to draw his nail across the canvas as the bent one had done. The voice of the man within halted. Tom Steepe entered sideways, bending forward, his eyes squinting at the candles. A gun was in his hand.

Haggard started to rise, but dropped back into his seat again, his pallor becoming tallowy, the whipped, fearful expression Lone Anstey had seen for an instant at the first shot of the volley. Then his eyes closed and his lips moved—startlingly lean and cadaver-like, he looked. The woman drew back and to the side, against the purple tapestry. She was listening to Tom Steepe's words:

"They didn't tell me you were a sick man, Haggard, Oh, I say, look up. I'm not killing you in cold blood—that is, unless you raise your voice!"

Haggard's head bowed but his eyes did not open.

"I've taken no end of trouble not to assassinate you—look at me," Tom said. "And this is the Monk from South America!"

Haggard uncovered his eyes, still fearful. "I was only startled a moment," he said with difficulty. "I am unused to war."

Tom took the table from between them and moved it aside.

"I need to see you full-length," he said queerly. "I am trying to get you all at once. They didn't tell me you were a humourist."

"What do you want?"

"I want you. I came to get you, but I'm giving you a chance for your life. It's you and me now—life or death—instead of two little comic opera armies. Simple, isn't it?"

Haggard cleared his throat persistently. "I've wanted to see you, too," he began.

Tom laughed. "I saw the placard."

"There is another placard with a bonus for your life, depreciating the value of your death," Haggard said. "I thought we might work together."

"I'm beginning to get you," Tom muttered. "No politics for you and me. Nothing like you and I working together. We're the whole war, here and now, in this tent——"

"But I am not a fighter with my hands."

"Knives?" Tom asked.

“Nor with knives.”

“Then put your hat on. We go to my lines. You can have your life at that price.”

“So I am to understand that my life is safe, if I should go with you as a prisoner of war?”

“I have a different name for it, but your life will be safe.”

“But why do you give me this chance?”

“You don’t get the point—the difference between a duel and a murder? I didn’t care to kill you from the flap—here.”

“I seem to be slow to understand.”

It was Tom’s strangest moment. He did not know that Haggard was killing time. The Monk’s eyes now held his with a steady, contemplative regard, voice controlled. Tom stepped back, studying the face. The next instant, he glanced closely for the first time at Lone Anstey—a thing of white terror in a black robe, a face that did not move, but which was a sublimato of warning and denial, every negative, the fingers of one hand queerly crumpled against her mouth. Now the Monk seemed looking beyond him, not missing the pistol still held in Tom’s hand, but beyond that, too, into the canvas; the eyes widened and lifted an instant, then the lids were pressed shut.

“You will permit me to consider a moment,” he said.

“About enough of that.”

“A moment to consider the cost of going with you.

You will grant it is a considerable change in my plans——”

Haggard turned to the woman, as if to advise with her, his expression distantly suggestive of a proprietary attitude.

“The word should come from you,” he said slowly. “The right word should come from you.”

She turned to him. That was the instant Tom saw the look in her face that went with her voice the night before, as he watched the two tents from the slope. The Monk’s voice was very gentle:

“You love this boy?” he said. “You didn’t tell me——”

“Cut it, Haggard. It’s you and me—this stuff——”

That instant Tom was caught from behind—caught low, his knees bound, the lower part of his body dragged back under the canvas, the upper part falling forward helplessly. Even as he fell, he saw Haggard rise, face illumined—rise, dash the candles from the table and leap toward him across the tent. Then in the darkness, his face gouged into the hard turf, Tom felt the boots of the Monk upon his neck and shoulders—stamping, and the crushing arms of the bent one who had come back to life.



### III

#### “ALL THE YEARS”

**L**ONE ANSTEY was thrust back into the darkness. She ran forward again but the Monk's arm struck her from him a second time. Now she was on her knees groping upon the ground near them—groping for the pistol which she had seen drop from Tom's hand, even as he fell himself. An awful humming madness came from her lips—as if she would go on groping forever and ever, failing to touch or find. The stamping ceased. The tent-flap was flung wide. The bent one, upon his knees, was now pulling the body of Tom Steepe clear from the canvas. Then Haggard's voice in uncontrollable exultation:

“Hai, you lame crook, don't kill him! Don't dip too deep! That's enough—I want him alive! I want him alive—at least, for to-night!”

Not until then was she released from the torture of consciousness.

. . . She had been following a light for ages. Again and again as she neared it she seemed unable to retain consciousness and fell back. This time she managed.

Her eyes opened to the re-lit candles upon Haggard's board. The horrors came back to her mind. She saw him sitting a little to the side, his eyes smiling upon her, smiling. Her lids dropped once more, but the two grey-green eyes she had just seen went on smiling in her brain.

He was ready to begin again; that was what the smile meant. There was a kind of chilled wonder throughout her being now. It was vaguely like a settling of all foundations under a burden never prepared for—that life could be so horrible as this.

“It's been hard for you, little girl.”

Her heart was listening for a voice outside.

“I know it's been hard—but you had to see. . . . You were so slow to see and believe. Rothatcher wasn't enough to show you. You saw him crumple in my Idea, but that wasn't enough. Now you've seen it work again before your eyes—before your eyes——”

He held up his hands and followed them with his glance, watching his slim, white fingers play in the dim shadows.

“Now you've seen it work upon the Island Man—the Island Man with compunctions! Curious lad, that—his dislike for assassinating me. Why, the Idea wouldn't let him!”

As one dying, she saw the green glaze again, as he laughed—the wolf somewhere in him, the werewolf. It wasn't that which locked her soul in ice now, but the fact that she was beginning to believe in his Idea. He

had made it work. He was making it work now. He was all the meaning of evil to her—the deepest, remotest meaning of Enemy. She had seen him handle his fears to-night with the power of thought—the same after the first shot of the volley. Before her eyes she had seen Tom Steepe go down before the unmoving body of the Monk. . . .

“The Idea wouldn’t let him get us, little girl. You must see that. The Idea will take care of me. It will take care of us. Won’t you come into it now? . . . You belong, you know.”

His joy mounted. He was making himself believe as he talked. She seemed but partly conscious, but this was Haggard’s high hour. Sitting before her now, she saw him in something like the return of his youth. The pallor of his long monastic years had filled in with faint tinges of colour; the gaunt look that had come from the devouring of his ambition was smoothed and warmed a little now from the nearness of victory. He basked.

It shook the foundations of her sanity to contain the ever-recurring horror—that Tom Steepe had fallen before this creature’s eyes; his body stamped into this degraded earth. Curiously, the Monk’s boots held her eyes now. They were slender and shapely and so near——

“The world lies before you, little girl,” he was saying. “For you alone there is infinite patience.”

She was already whelmed in words. Her glance darted to his face but not in understanding or inter-

est. They returned to his feet again—slim, shining-booted and so still.

“Not Tanalao alone, but the world—to share with me. All that the Idea means—to share with me. . . . You are dear to me because you are beautiful, but more, because you are a power. You need a mate—not a boy, but a man. Not a yoke, but wings, little girl, not an Island, but a world.”

Shapely and slender, they were, not nailed and cloven.

“. . . You have loved the boy. I felt it before. I saw it this night. A puppy thing, but I will not destroy him. You heard me save his life under the lame one's knife? Because you loved him! And you shall have his life. It is before you now—in your own hands——”

She knew he meant that she must give herself to him for Tom Steepe's life. She heard her own voice, as she asked if he meant just this. So loud and foreign, her voice sounded. A wintry cloud crossed the Monk's face. It was as if he did not like her voice.

“It would but mean for you to come into your own,” he said.

The face of Tom Steepe was before her inner eye again, just as the candles went out—his face, as the body fell forward—all the suffering he had known, the laugh still holding as he went down. It was all lost—his life, her life, the dream—but the mother-thing lived untouched in her heart, crying that the body of him should not suffer any more.

"I can't have him hurt any more," she said slowly.

"He shall not be hurt again, little girl," the Monk answered, rising.

"Don't come near!"

He stood by his chair, instead of coming forward.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—don't come nearer. I cannot breathe!"

"But you want his life——"

"Yes. He has been hurt so many times."

"That means I come near."

His arms were held out. The single word burst from her:

"Don't!"

"You are to let his life pass?"

"You mean his life waits for my word now—my giving myself to you?"

Haggard was angered at the strength of her voice.

"Yes, now."

"Then I give his life away! The years, I give them all away!"

"Little girl, you shall hear him cry for his life from the next tent——"

"He is not—he is not afraid to die! He knows my love now—my love for him beyond the years. Hear me, Tom Steepe—my love for you now, and beyond the years!"

Haggard rushed to stop her voice, as the cry went out, but halted at the sound of a low, quick, choking sound outside the tent, and the fall of a rifle. He

sprang to the flap, but fell back as if a great rock had been rolled close to the canvas. His pistol dropped at her feet.

She heard the hissing curse from his lips as he reached one hand down, feeling for the pistol, his face still held toward the tent-opening. Her eyes suddenly lifted to see what Haggard saw—another face above him, seen through the flap, huge face and broad figure that loomed. The Monk's eyes turned to her insanely, his hand still brushing the ground, his shoulders shrunken and shapeless.

One great hand entered and closed upon Haggard's throat. The broad figure followed the hand in and the free hand began to pound—rose and fell ponderously—until she cried out.

"He might live, mom, if I stop now," Bos'n panted.

Then he saw her horror, and pulled the body around, putting his own between, to shut it from her eyes. Kneeling now, he pounded on. Her hand went out to him, then to her throat, as if to help the word:

"Stop!"

"I'm stoppin' now, mom. It's breakin' in, 'is 'ead is."

The sea-faring one turned at last, saying pitifully:

"Don't leave me alone——"

He did not mean alone in the tent, but alone with the thoughts of the thing he had done.

"Oh, no—never alone—but stop now!"

"'E's done, mom. It's the Fallen One, 'e is."

She could not rise. Bos’n bent over her, saying:

“We’ll go back to *’im* now!”

He meant to take her back to Tom Steepe at Kalilorei. He didn’t know.

“In the next tent, Bos’n!” she managed to say. “Tom Steepe came for us to-night. He is there in the next tent, but hurt. The bent one is keeping him alive in there!”

Bos’n seemed unable to understand. She saw Haggard’s clapper on the table.

“Wait. Hand me that!” she gasped.

She sounded the two pieces of wood; then a second time. The bent one did not come, but a faint cry answered.

“Go in there, Bos’n!” she commanded now. “Tom Steepe is there—the next tent—in the hands of the bent one! Go to him and be silent. There must be no shot—no shot, Bos’n—for that would arouse the soldiers who would prevent us getting away!”

He was gone. Once she heard the pounding again. The sight of Haggard’s body on the floor so near gave her strength to rise. She stepped over the slim boots and out through the flap of the tent. Haggard’s little sentry lay there face down on the ground. The Bos’n had grappled him first of all.

She was making her way toward the other tent. All that she really knew was that Haggard had commanded his servant to keep Tom Steepe alive. It seemed a great distance to the other tent, her misery and exhaus-

tion very great. The broad shoulders of Bos'n appeared against the canvas. Another was with him—she could not be sure. She rubbed her eyes. It was not bent one.

Not bent one. It was Tom Steepe, calling softly to her. He did live! He could stand—and run. She was in his arms.

It was all a blur—only highlights after that. Tom Steepe's face was changed, but his low laugh was the same. His arms did not leave her. His voice called to her to live. Part of the way she was all but carried between him and the Bos'n. He was keeping her alive, she thought, as her head would sink back. They were in dusty thickets—hiding—crossing brief open spaces—the whole flight terrible in slowness, as they kept in the shadow of the thickets and the low hills.

The high angular shadow of the stockade was ahead. His arms still sustained her. Then they were in the open road between the lines of the Monk and the outer huts of Kalilorei. Minutes after that there was a great lifting cry from the people. . . .

Dawn—arms of the native women—sound of the sea.



## IV

### DAYS OF DEEP BREATHING

**O**FTEN during the mid-days, their pallets were drawn together in the shadows; but morning and evening hours, they lay upon the hills in the sun, or were carried to the bluffs overlooking the sea. Tom Steepe expected to be up and about in a day or two, but it was not so. As the days passed, for a while he sank deeper into a weariness such as he had never known before. His ugly wounds healed quickly enough, but there had been deeper strains; a slight draft, in fact, upon the very principle of his organic vitality—strange experience for one who had lived well heretofore upon the accumulations of interest. But there was new healing in his world.

Lone Anstey went deeper still, touching a depth where there was no sun, no moon. Tom was always near. He seemed to know something of her speechless agony of certain moments. She would feel his hand holding, as if he were leading her slowly back; also his voice, with no words she remembered, leading her up and up, as he had led her that night through the dusty thickets back to the outer posts of Kalilorei. She would awake to

find him bending over her, wistful, embarrassed by his own tenderness.

At length, fully ten days after Tom Steepe learned all over again to keep step with the old rhythm of day and night, Lone Anstey began to nestle a little where she lay in the shadow or the sun; a stealing of new delight of earth in her limbs, the beginnings of a poignant joy in the sunny wind, as it blew over the dried grasses on the bluffs above the sea. Life was breathing back faintly into her veins. Once her eyes filled with tears, because she saw the distances of the sea in Tom Steepe's eyes; that blue calm of ocean that had lured so long alone the soul of the Island man. It was all different to him now, because his hand stole hurriedly down for hers as he looked. Tears came, because she knew they could go together.

Then there were days when they lay upon the sand at the very edge of the tide-lines and looked out past the scimitar-point, which formed one land's end of Kalilorei's sea-gate. Always he smiled as he thought of the secret of the treasure. Loril would come (still making them think of the dawnlight) and sit a little, mostly silent except when he brought some word of his people and their rising, building joy in what the white man had done. . . . Once Rosie Bartel found them with her splintered humour:

"You've got it all to yourselves—you two!" she began. "No stopping you. I got that at the go-off.

Oh, you two put it over all right. You learned working together——”

“But you?” Lone Anstey said, sensing something of finality in Rosie’s tone.

“Firk’s taking me back. He’s setting me down in New York where he found me. The old man’s letting him go again, but it’s only to cut him off. Firk don’t know it. He’s so mad to go, he’d go anyway. Poor kid, he’s sick for the city, but he’s making good on seeing me home. . . . Always said he’d see me back to Dutch Newbegin’s, where we began, if I ever got lonesome. It isn’t me; it’s Firk that’s mad to get back. I could stay on——”

She groped for a cigarette and lit it against the wind.

“And he doesn’t know the old man will cut him off when he gets there! . . . And there isn’t a day’s work in the kid, not going or coming. It’ll be up to little Rosie—till she gets too tired. God, dearie, I could slave for a woman—but with a man it’s just so far—oh, quite a ways, you know, but no farther. You two, how do you do it——”

She laughed, eyeing Tom Steepe sideways:

“And I’d size him up for a beater, too,” she added to Lone Anstey.

She went up the cliff laughing and presently they saw Firk join her, and the nervous flirt of his lifted hand as he started to speak.

“Poor babes in the woods,” Lone Anstey said.

Occasionally, Bos'n joined them, and though he didn't know, they often looked his way through eyelids that smarted.

"Bos' gets what he goes after," Tom remarked. "He followed you to bring you back to me. It was all he knew from the moment he overtook you in the jungle. He waited his hour——"

Tom halted. She could get very still and close to him in moments like this, when he spoke of the sea-faring one, or of his little native soldiers. She saw how real was his love for men, a magic thing for her to work with, for a man's man is a woman's man at the last.

Few words from the Bos'n since that night when he struck. Something new was being born in him. They saw intimations of the mystery back of his mournful eyes. Though the sea called to him, not the slightest indication appeared that he would ever go his way alone. Apparently he was as content to be near Lone Anstey as with the man himself. She understood at last.

"It is not for me that he cares," she explained. "At least, not for myself, but because he thinks I am part of you."

Another time she went deeper into the puzzle of the broad, grieving face. He seemed building over a new faith, a sort of new dimension of life, in the meaning of man and woman.

"He makes me afraid!" she whispered. "He's put-

ting his faith in us, and oh, we must never hurt that!"

Tom laughed.

"I mean it! It would be unspeakable to fail before those sorrowing eyes. We must be as straight to him always, as to your little soldiers——"

"Mine?"

"I have no illusions. They are mad—at least softly insane, about you."

Many days passed before they spoke of the different episodes of Haggard's last night.

"You never told me what happened in the other tent when I sent the Bos'n to you——" she dared to say at last.

"You mean after Bos' had finished the Monk?"

"Yes."

Tom wasn't too explicit even now. "That was genius!" he said strangely. "I always think of that as genius—that sounding the clapper-thing of yours!"

"I saw it on the table."

"That was what did it. Oh, yes, just that. I think he had never disobeyed that call in all his life, the little yellow fiend. He was over me, pricking me when I stirred. His knife, you know—just pricking me enough to keep me down and under. I wasn't bound. He hadn't put down the knife long enough for that—but I was groggy—blood and dirt in my eyes. His orders were to keep me alive——"

"Haggard wanted the secret from you—Tanalao's secret!" she whispered.

Tom nodded.

"Then the clapper sounded. He whimpered. Actually whimpered that he couldn't go—like a dog that had never disobeyed. It sounded again. He turned. I took him as he turned, but he had the——"

"I know! I know——" she was seeing the knife.

"The Bos'n came then. . . . It's all right. It's all right, Lone Anstey. We won't have to go over it again. The Bos'n came, as I say, and we had him between us."

One day as they sat together down on the shore, she saw a queer, embarrassed look come over Tom's face.

"I never gave you anything," he said abruptly.

She laughed. "Why, you haven't done much else."

"That's one way to look at it, but I've got a little thing here that belongs to you——"

A flush was upon his face as he brought forth a flat pocket-piece dulled from wear. "It really ought to have come from a man's mother to his—to his girl, but it didn't. It came from the toughest white man I ever knew, and the gamest. He took me in when I was a kid up yonder. He taught me how to shoot and ride and he told me all about the little 'niggers'—that's what he called them, the little Tagals of Luzon."

It was the unset cameo of chalcedony.

"It came from *his* mother, all right," he added. "I used to see it when his shirt opened. He wore it around his neck on a string like a woman. They gave it to me after they killed him——"

She saw that by "they" he meant the soldiers who had put him in Bilibid.

"And it was the only time I ever held out my hands to them—when they took it off his neck. Old Perry Chase. . . . They called him a 'nigger lover,' but he certainly knew how to take care of a kid. . . . I remember once how he pulled me over to his saddle when a Krag got me in the back——"

She winced.

"I didn't mean to hurt you, Lone Anstey. It was nothing. I healed like an angleworm."

She opened her fingers that held the cameo.

"I'll wear it on a string on my neck like a woman," she said.

That evening all Kalilorei was red with afterglow, the sea a softly foaming red. That was the night she dared to put on the little frock Loril's sister had given her, the little one-piece silken thing, hand-woven of heavy, creamy strands.

"Come away," he whispered.

Their steps hastened to a still lonely place in a hollow between the hills. They halted, and his eyes turned in from the sea which was wine-dark now.

"You frighten me, Lone Anstey! You frighten me——"

"But why?"

"You're so pretty and so hard to get! Some time you'll go—you or I will go. I mean life ends. One of us will——"

"I've thought of that," she answered. "Yet it's different and better than we can think now. The years fix that for two who are always dear—for two who lose themselves in others. Why, the years come on with miracles."

"You've got everything, Lone Anstey! You always know," he told her. "Only I can't see how I have everything for you."

"That is for me to see," she whispered. "It is before my eyes. It fills my ears now. And oh, Tom Steepe, it never ends."

They walked back together.



## V

### TWO VANISH IN NUPTIAL FLIGHT

IT was nearly five weeks after the night they left Haggard's camp when the first word came in through Scarbaran's agents over in Tanalao, the City, that the *Singmaster* was in the harbour with a passenger-list of mixed strangers, mostly white men. It was reported that these were miners, and that Messrs. Rothatcher and Anstey had struck something worth developing on their plantations. For the first time in many days, Tom saw a look of the old white weariness in Lone Anstey's face.

"Londal and his incorrigibles," she said.

The miners used the *Singmaster* for headquarters during the first week. No more than two boatloads came ashore at a time. Though they drank with a great common thirst, there was no breaking-out in a large way, until the main body took up quarters in the City. Here it appeared that even Londal's iron hand proved inadequate, and after two days' festivities, during which the native inhabitants of the little open port saw the life of the civilised world as never before (many of the native women taking to the hills), the miners were transferred into the great hacienda, which the

partners had not occupied since the army of the Monk "grazed" there.

Londal's outfit was very closely watched by Scarbaran's spies. The miners appeared to find it difficult to change the idea that their coming to Tanalao was an excursion. At the same time, unmistakable evidences of fresh trouble for Scarbaran began to be manifest. Many Chinese and natives were gathering to the hacienda, word having been sent abroad through the Island that full-price in gold would be paid for Krag rifles and ammunition, if these were brought in by the holders to whom they had been issued by Haggard, the Monk. Through this means, many of Haggard's soldiers were attracted to report to Londal, and a considerable proportion remained to serve in the new cause, instead of merely disposing of rifles and cartridges. Few words from Lone Anstey, as the plan grew in Tom Steepe's mind. It matured far more quickly than her strength of heart to endure the thought of violence again.

"Oh, yes—it is one more stroke," she said hopelessly. "I have seen it coming on, and you are going from me! I don't see how you can face it again—after what we know. There's something in a man that is different—that he can go forth again and again. To a woman—it smothers and horrifies!"

"It will be done in a night," he told her. "It's only this once, this last time. It's for them; it's part of our job for Scarbaran, Lone Anstey. Londal is backed by Rothatcher to finish the job that Haggard started.

Londal will strike if we don't. . . . You'll see. We'll be back in the morning."

Late one afternoon he filed five hundred of his men and boys down into the bamboo-hollows where he had first struck Haggard's trailing outfit. In early dusk the quiet, happy force resumed its way in toward Scarbaran's jungle-camp and beyond. They followed the little river to the Mirlapani and forded between nine and ten in the evening, reaching the vicinity of the hacienda after silent, rapid marching at one in the morning.

Tom struck immediately, not leaving much chance for any of his men to stumble upon Londal's outposts. He directed Loril to take the large part of his force for assaults upon the coffee, tobacco, and banana-houses where Londal's main outfits were quartered. At the first firing, he led a hundred men straight through the lines to the hacienda.

Hot and smoky work on the inside. Tom found the switches in many rooms and halls, turning on the lights with his own hand, laughing and shouting as Scarbaran's men and boys poured through. Always more light, he wanted, to work by. His voice was heard above the yells of the startled "miners" outside and the steady native fire from the screens of thickets and trees. . . . Gholson was sitting up in bed, making hoarse protests, when they found him—the cloth about his throat. Puddifoot in pajamas was quieted after several dashes through the brilliant hall. Tom took a bullet in his

shoulder from the sparkling little fiend of the *Sing-master*—Captain Corn. That shot was from the side, while Tom was engaged in a pistol-duel with Londal himself. The red one had pulled a player-piano from the wall and was firing from behind. He held up his hands at last, having tossed forth his gun, only because it was empty. Captain Corn had to be pounded on the head before he was carried out, *sans* polished boots and rounded cuffs.

Then fires were started. The great tropical house was lit in many places before Tom left. He was looking room by room for another trophy which was not there—a human one, a large and bearded one, whom he had especially cared to fetch back to Kalilorei. Apart from this missing of Rothatcher, it was rather a finished piece of work. The open camps of Londal's fighters and the outhouses on the grounds had been played upon steadily and painstakingly from the outer circle of Scarbaran's ancient muskets. There was better light to fire by, toward the last. The flames of the hacienda loomed, and Tom's little outfit, which had worked in the hacienda, was enabled to rejoin the others, without serious fire from their own friends on the way out.

For an hour they stayed under the red Island sky, making occasional charges to burn an out-building, and keeping up a scattered practice at the figures darting here and there to deeper cover. The remnants of Londal's army limped down to the open port before dawn,

not requiring a further beating, in Tanalao, at least; and the iron hand that had held them together was clenched in impotent anger, a few hours later, within the stockade of Scarbaran's closed town.

Tom was carried in a palanquin from the bamboo-hollows, not because he was seriously hurt, but because half the city had come forth to meet his returning force, and there were many bearers for each one of the wounded. They went up into the city singing.

"I wanted Rothatcher," he said to Lone Anstey, with a tired smile. "I wanted another look at him. He's the core of it all, but he wasn't there, nor your uncle, but we collected the rest."

There appeared no abatement, as the days drew on, to the glorifying of Tom Steepe's exploits on the part of Scarbaran's people. From all parts of the Island the natives came at different times, as if sent for; came with their families to listen and to feast. Loril would bring the white man to touch the children and to sit with the elders for a little space. Tom would escape to join Lone Anstey early, while Loril retold the story of his lone war, always telling it carefully and fully, beginning and ending the same way. The episodes were never enlarged upon and the details were placed, if anything, more and more exactly.

"But there's no let up to it," Tom finally complained to Lone Anstey.

"Oh, Tom, don't you see, it's because you're within reach, they love you so!" she answered. "They can

touch you—touch the hand that did these things which are big to them.”

“But wouldn’t you think they’d forget it?”

“It isn’t the way of Easterns to forget. You have taught them how to laugh at danger; something that the East has forgotten and the West has just learned to do; to laugh at danger, one of the best things they do in America!”

One morning they were out before dawn, wandering alone among the windy hills. Their hands clasped at last, and their eyes closed against the strong reds and fresh golds of daybreak. They paused like children to breathe the wind of the sea and listen to the song of a hidden bird. The tints of young morning were full in the sky, as they halted at the edge of the land. The man pointed across the little harbour of Kalilorei, so long virgin to the outer world. Then they saw the thin cone of black smoke, and the leaden grey of the warship’s body, low like a couchant hound. She was stealing in, and, thin across the still waters, they heard the song of her soundings. Her stern slowly swung around. It was Lone Anstey who saw first the red gleam of the British flag.

“Rothatcher has sold out,” Tom said slowly, at last. “They’ve come for the treasure. It’s the end of Scarbaran after all. We must hurry back and tell them. . . . And there’s the little matter of our own getaway, Lone Anstey, don’t you see it? It’s time now for you and me to disappear from this man’s world!”

## EPILOGUE

"So fleet the works of men back to their earth again,  
Ancient and holy things fade like a dream."

THE rains were on in Manila, but the sun flashed from time to time through the crumpled, driving clouds, and the city then became like a steam-room with softly-roaring drains. Rothatcher had been abroad for two hours. He reached the awninged harbour of the Oriente at ten in the morning, just as the venerable Bellamy's grey ponies were pulled up under the washed and dripping palms in front. It was an appointment made yesterday, and one of those appointments which became more attractive to Bellamy in the interval, though lightly made.

The bearded one looked hard at the other, while his smile held peace and amity. Accustomed to see many of his acquaintances only once or twice a year, he studied the extent of tropical ravage meanwhile. He held Bellamy's both eyes at once apparently, but really it was an invisible point between the two into which he sunk his gaze. He no longer looked at, but practised looking into, a man, an art picked up in the tent of one Haggard, the ill-fated Monk, who all but turned over Ambergris Isle many weeks before. This was a break-



fast engagement for Bellamy, but Rothatcher merely cooled himself with white grapes and dry wine.

He decided that the old chaplain was breaking down. The faintest possible yellow fog was upon a countenance that had been lustrous white these many years.

"It was just yonder we sat on the morning Tom Steepe passed—the last we saw of him here," Bellamy said reflectively. "We heard he was working for you."

"That was true—in a way," the bearded one mused.

"For once, Worden-Key missed," the other added. "Did you know, quite inadvertently that day, we started Worden-Key on the young man's trail—our little talk together? . . . I was miserable after you left, watching momentarily for Tom's arrest. It seemed incredible he could slip the leash."

"He has slipped several since," Rothatcher smiled. "One of the very few of us down here who hold our own."

"Where is he now—our wandering boy?"

"You were rather fond of Tom Steepe?"

"I might say as much as that—an old man's interest," Bellamy explained. "Where is he now?"

"The last I heard positively, he was down in the mountains of Tanalao on his honeymoon."

"Tom Steepe married?"

"Only a woman could tame his sort."

"You knew the woman?"

"My partner's niece. Yes, I knew her. She has the gold in her, too—the Island sort. Wanted to



mother all Tanalao, when she first heard the natives sing——”

“Did she meet Tom down there?”

“Down that way, and they fitted like twins when they got together—always reached the same point of view, though by different angles. Natives took them in for a time; sort of expected them, it appeared. Simple folk have their ears close to the ground for that sort of thing.”

“They worked together among the natives?”

“Yes, it was like that.”

“But what did her uncle think—your partner?”

“What Victor thinks hurts him,” Rothatcher explained seriously. “Most modern of men, but fixed in his views. Famous partnership, you understand, but I had to differ with him on certain points in those days before the British came. Also his niece differed. It was more than my old associate could endure. He’s back in the Himalayas now, seeking the silence that was broken after so many years in Tanalao.”

Bellamy spoke:

“We’ve heard a hundred stories here in Manila, but I’ve been waiting for you, Rothatcher, to put me straight. The boys here look upon me as a sort of tribal teller of tales. What is the story of Tanalao’s treasure?”

“Why the *Bolívar*, the British treasure ship, with her million pounds sterling—the old *Bolívar*, of verse and song and school reader, lost on her way Home from

India,—almost as much talked-of as the *Phantom* herself!”

“Yes, I know that, but what——?”

“She’s been lying on the floor of Kalilorei, Scarbaran’s eastern harbor in little Tanalao—twelve fathoms deep, for over a hundred years. You could see her flattened out down there when the top water was still ——”

“How could the secret have been kept so long, if you could see her lying there?”

“You’d have to know where to look, and you wouldn’t know it was a treasure ship, if you hadn’t the secret.”

Rothatcher was enjoying himself.

“But did Scarbaran and his natives know about it all the time?”

“Scarbaran and his father, and his two sons, and Scarbaran’s wife. The secret only passed among those who ruled the tribe?”

“But why didn’t they salvage—I mean the natives?” Bellamy asked.

“Two reasons: First, it lay too deep for their native divers, and if Scarbaran undertook to negotiate for a ship and diving apparatus in a foreign port, he knew the secret would be half out. The second was a sort of tradition that came down from Scarbaran’s father, or father’s father, so far as I know, to the effect that the salvage of the *Bolivar* would mean the breaking up of the tribe.”

"It has meant that, hasn't it?" Bellamy said curiously.

"In a way, yes. You might look at it that way."

"But we heard of a Portuguese who had the knowledge about the *Bolivar*——"

"That's part of the talk," Rothatcher said. "Too long ago to get it straight, but the story is that when Scarbaran's father ruled the Island, a ship came to Kalilorei and dropped hooks at once on the floor of the harbour. The Islanders burned the ship before the sailors grappled. One small boat of sailors pulled out of the harbour faster than the native canoes, but they perished at sea—all but one of the sailors. The yarn runs that this sailor talked a great deal when he got old, but no one believed him, except a certain Portuguese, who could not rest, but came down among the islands trying to secure a ship and diving-suits for deep-sea work——"

"Rather misty," Bellamy said with regret.

"Mere tradition," said the bearded one.

"So the British have actually taken over your little Island, since they salvaged old *Bolivar*?" Bellamy reflected aloud.

"Not formally, but to that effect. They occupy Kalilorei, the little native port, sealed so long against foreigners. Scarbaran has moved his capital down into the southern mountains. Most inaccessible refuge, they tell me, down by the ambergris strand."

"Did Scarbaran's whole tribe follow?"

"No, only the older element. The rest stayed where they were and are learning to speak English like Japanese and a lot that goes with it; little Tanalao is changing colour these days like chemicals in a flame."

This was more than indulging the whim of an old man. Rothatcher was quite aware that what he told Bellamy would be told again.

"Yes, the English practically hold Kalilorei," he went on. "Their diving outfits work out from there, and the tradesmen are flocking down—miners, planters, a branch of the East India Company and the Hong Kong Bank. Three weeks ago I saw the ancient picture and legend on the walls of the new postmaster's private office down in the open port."

"Picture and legend?"

"Bull-dog looking out from the folds of the flag and the gritty old line below, 'What we 'ave, we'll 'old.'"

"We heard of a lot of fighting down there before the British took on," Bellamy observed.

"Treasure was in the wind," Rothatcher explained. "Queer about that. It would take Victor Anstey to make clear the psychology of all that. Scarbaran threw us off the trail by talking about ambergris, but there seemed to be pull enough to that. For a few weeks the different outfits of treasure-hunters mixed with each other. Londal and his party——"

"Londal was here a few weeks ago," Bellamy interrupted. "He had little to say, except that he was working alone these days."

Rothatcher seemed to find mysterious humour in this bit of gossip.

"Londal was Scarbaran's guest for weeks in Kalilorei—Londal and party. Somehow, the natives made him forget the treasure. Then there was a Monk from South America said to be assassinated by a Chinese servant, just as he was getting things going his way——"

". . . Wasn't there anything to the ambergris thing?" Bellamy asked.

"Never proved out, but the English are looking into it. I'm not following affairs so close since Victor went away—gradually getting out from under our Tanalao holdings."

"But what was Tom Steepe's part, and the woman's?"

"You'll have to name it. They worked in the background. A sort of philanthropy for the natives—standing for the under-dog against the wolves and vultures come to usurp old Scarbaran's rights."

"I don't—I can't quite piece that out."

"It doesn't piece. I've tried it," said Rothatcher.

"Where are they now?"

"Tom Steepe and the one who was Miss Anstey?"

"Yes."

"I've heard they've gone over to the mainland. I've heard they are still in the Southern mountains of Tanalao. I've heard that they've gone to America with an old boatswain of mine dogging their steps out of sheer devotion. Take your choice, Chaplain."

The talk trailed. The eyes of the venerable Bellamy were weary with mysteries unsatisfied. He tried once more.

"But who gave up the secret of the British in the first place—the secret of the *Bolivar's* last port?"

The bearded one had drained his second glass. He held the last grape, the largest and most perfect, between the thumb and first finger of his brown and hairy left hand. He regarded the white and waxen skin as if it held the beginning and end of the whole story—possibly to take the old chaplain's attention from the twinkle in his own eye.

"I've heard it was Scarbaran's elder son," he answered. "One night when he was drunk in New York. Firk, they called the boy. The tribe is said to have cast him out."

He drew in his chair suddenly toward the table, for the first drops of another shower spattered the ground too near his white shoes.

END



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